French's Acting Edition. No. 1129

COLLUSION

A Trifle in Three Acts

By J. E. HAROLD TERRY

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By

J. E. HAROLD TERRY

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WITHDRAWN

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TO MY FRIEND
VERNON WOODHOUSE
WHO GAVE ME THE "BRIGHT IDEA"
UPON WHICH THIS BAGATELLE IS
BASED

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COLLUSION

This play was presented for the first time in London at the Ambassadors' Theatre on Tuesday, April 1st, 1924, by Thomas C. Dagnall and Alban B. Limpus, the cast being as follows :—

(*In the order of their appearance.*)

HEATLEY	*Mary Forrester*
WING-COMMANDER RIDGEWELL, D.S.O., M.C. . .	*Hugh Wakefield*
MAJOR WIBLEY, M.C.	*S. J. Warmington*
OWEN FFOLLIOTT	*Brian Gilmour*
DIANA RIDGEWELL	*Iris Hoey*
MR. ARCHER	*Allan Aynesworth*

The Lounge-hall of the RIDGEWELLS' Maisonette in Knightsbridge.

ACT I.—Afternoon.

ACT II.—The night of November 7th. (Nearly midnight.) The CURTAIN falls for an instant to indicate the passage of four hours.

ACT III.—The Next Morning.

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COLLUSION

ACT I

SCENE.—*The Lounge-hall of the* RIDGEWELLS' *Maisonette in Knightsbridge.*

As the Hall of Mirrors is to the Black Hole of Calcutta so is this delightfully light and airy apartment to the dismal den that constitutes the average lounge-hall of villadom. Its decoration is almost fragile in its daintiness. The walls are panelled in white to half their height and from there, upwards to the frieze and cornice of white plaster, are papered in dove-grey, which serves as an admirable background for water-colour drawings outlined in narrow frames of white enamel. Plates of Chinese porcelain of the Kang H'si period stand out in vivid relief from the ivory whiteness of the frieze, and the brilliant hues of cushions and of hangings combine with them in giving warmth and colour to the room. There is an abundance of photographs in costly frames, and everywhere are flowers—groups of heavily-scented lilies, bowls of carnations, and vases of long-stemmed, hothouse-grown roses. There is nothing masculine about the room. It is pervaded by the personality of an artistic, fastidious, and extravagant woman with a keen appreciation of the good things of life and of its creature comforts. The arm-chairs are luxurious and spacious. The divan, heaped with cushions, invites repose.

Up stage R.C. *at the back of the room a curtained archway leads, by way of a diminutive entrance-hall, or lobby, to the front door. Here are a telephone on a small table to the* R. *of the door, a hat and coat rack, and an umbrella-stand, to the* L. *of the door.*

Left of the archway up L.C. *is a staircase with balustrade that leads by two short flights of steps to a small landing and so to the main bedroom.*

Below this up L. *is a door giving admission to the servants' quarters, set in the alcove formed by the staircase and the projection of the fireplace from the left-hand wall.*

A little below and to the right of the main entrance is the door of the guest-room, and below this again and facing the fireplace is the window.

(*See ground plan of scene.*)

(*When the* CURTAIN *rises the stage is unoccupied.*)

The ringing of an electric bell proclaims the presence of somebody at the front door.

The bell rings twice before Heatley, *a parlourmaid of superior type, enters by way of the service door* L. *She pauses before a mirror up* C. *to adjust her cap and apron to her satisfaction and then proceeds to answer the bell. Before throwing the front door wide she conceives it to be incumbent upon her to satisfy herself as to the identity and bona fides of the two men who seek admission. They are, in fact,* Wing-Commander Ridgewell *and his friend* Major Wibley. *The former speaks.*)

Ridgewell (*invisible to the audience*). Mrs. Ridgewell at home ?

Heatley. No, sir.

Ridgewell. Are you expecting her soon ?

Heatley. She said she'd be back to tea, sir.

Ridgewell. Then we'd better wait for her.

(*He addresses another individual unseen.*)

What d'you say, Dick ?

Wibley. At your service.

(*They step inside.* Heatley *admits them with evident reluctance.* Wibley *stands* R. *and* Ridgewell L. *of the archway.* Heatley, *having left the front door open, is standing above and between them.*)

Heatley. Excuse me, sir, but—er—is Mrs. Ridgewell expecting you ?

Ridgewell. No ; no. I—er—I've only just arrived from Mesopotamia. I'm Wing-Commander Ridgewell.

Wibley. Your master.

(Heatley's *jaw drops. It is clear that she is taken aback. She exclaims feebly :*)

Heatley. Oh !

Wibley. What's the matter ?

Heatley. Well, sir, I—I'm sure it's as you say, but there's such a lot of suspicious characters about—two flats burgled in this building only last week—that—— (*Looking from one to the other.*)

Wibley. But—confound and hang it, girl !—do we look suspicious ?

Heatley. No, sir ; that's just it. It's them as don't look suspicious as you have to be most careful of.

Ridgewell. Well, what d'you want ? My card satisfy you ?

Heatley. If you happen to have one on you, sir.

Ridgewell (*having searched his wallet*). No—dash it !—I haven't. But here're a couple of envelopes addressed to me—one in your mistress's handwriting. How'll those do ?

(Heatley *examines and returns them to him.*)

Heatley. Thank you, sir. (*She moves towards* Wibley.) Will you come in?

(Wibley *gives* Heatley *his hat, which she hangs upon the stand in the lobby. She closes the front door.* Ridgewell *drops down* L.C. *and* Wibley R. *of table.* Heatley *moves to the* R. *of* Ridgewell.)

I don't expect the mistress'll be long. . . . Can I get you anything, sir?

(*She extends a hand to receive* Ridgewell's *cap. He pops it nervously behind his back. After* Heatley *has gone out, he deposits it, together with his cane, on a small table above the divan,* L.C.)

Ridgewell. Not for me, thank you. . . . You, Dick?
Wibley. No, thanks.
Heatley. Very good, sir.

(*She crosses slowly to the service-door up* L., *with several backward glances of suspicion, and goes out.*)

(*Left alone, the two men look at one another quizzically. They are in marked contrast*—Ridgewell *unusually short and squat of figure, with a comically deprecating countenance,* Wibley *tall and stalwart, with a strong, rather pugnacious face. He is by several years the elder of the two, although their joint ages do not amount to threescore years and ten. A first-rate pilot and a most capable soldier,* Ridgewell *is curiously diffident and self-effacing when brought into contact with civilian life. He is not unhappy in the company of men, although his reserve is such as to keep him always in the background, but introduce him into the society of women, and he is acutely unhappy. Whatever self-confidence he has deserts him utterly. He is nervous, ill-at-ease, and quite incapable of asserting himself.* Ridgewell, *having come direct from the Air Ministry, is in uniform,* Wibley *in mufti.*)

Wibley. There's a nice cheery welcome home! (*He laughs.*) Suspected of loitering with intent to commit a felony by your own maid! . . . She's new, of course.

Ridgewell (*standing* C.—*looking about him sadly*). Everything's new—wall-paper, pictures, furniture, cretonnes, maid. Di's done the job thoroughly. There's nothing left to remind me of the little home we made together.

Wibley (*crossing below table up to* Ridgewell). Except the hole in your banking account.

Ridgewell (*pathetically*). There's nothing left there.

Wibley. Poor old chap! . . . But—dash it!—I should have thought that girl would have recognized you from your photograph.

Ridgewell. Oh, I dunno. I haven't had one taken since before the War, and I've changed a lot since then.

Wibley. Be blowed to that for a tale! (*He slaps him vigorously upon the shoulder.* Ridgewell *jumps.*) Your ugly old mug hasn't

altered a bit in twenty years. . . . Now where is there a photograph of you? (*Starting at mantelpiece* L., *he hunts around the room.*) Hum! Can't find one. (*He comes to a halt above the writing-table, and scrutinizes a series of photographs that stand upon it.*) You don't seem to be included in *this* portrait-gallery.

Ridgewell (*gloomily*). My dear chap, you know the circumstances.

Wibley. Circumstances that alter faces! I don't like 'em. (*He looks sharply from the photographs to* Ridgewell.) Who's Owen?

Ridgewell (*blankly*). Owen? Owen who?

Wibley. His tailor I should fancy by the look of him. She's got a sort of shrine erected to him here. Owen in flannels. Owen in morning coat. Owen in uniform. Owen in tweeds. (*Reading the inscriptions on the photographs aloud.*) "To Di from Owen"—"Thine, Owen"—"Toujours à toi, Owen"—"O to D" . . . Oh, to hell! (*He flings the last one violently on to the desk, and stalks down stage* R.)

Ridgewell. I say, old man, do you mind putting that photograph back where you found it? Di's most particular. She hates to have things moved.

Wibley. Is *that* all you've got to say?

Ridgewell. What about?

Wibley (*with savage emphasis—coming to below the table*). Owen! (*He bangs the photograph back into its place.*)

Ridgewell (*sitting on the* R. *of the divan, mildly*). Oh, Owen. I expect he's a pal o' the wife's. She said something to me in one of her letters about a dancing partner she'd found.

Wibley (*snatching up the photograph again, and glaring at it*). That's just what he looks like—poisonous beast!—dances around her morning, noon, and——

Ridgewell (*warningly*). Dick!

Wibley. You'll be lucky if that's all. (*He replaces the photograph, and sits upon the table facing up to* Ridgewell.) Good God, man!—can't you put two and two together?

Ridgewell. Not so as to make 'em five.

Wibley. Who's makin' 'em five? . . . You told me at lunch that you'd come back from Mesopotamia post-haste because you'd had a letter from your wife saying that your marriage has been a mistake from the word "go" (*rising*), and that she relies upon your —your—er—— (*He casts about for the word.*)

(Ridgewell *prompts him.*)

Ridgewell. Chivalry.

Wibley (*with a snort*).—Chivalry!—to allow her to divorce you. (*Moving up* R. *above the table.*)

Ridgewell. Correct.

Wibley (*sitting in the chair at the head of the table*). Well, what's the reason of that letter? There must *be* a reason.

Ridgewell (*moving down to chair* L. *of the writing-table*). Ah! You don't know Di.

Wibley. You've come back to discover it—to find out how the land lies, haven't you?

Ridgewell. I've come back to discover from my wife——

Wibley. Well, you can spare yourself the trouble. (*Picking up two of the photographs and "planking" them in front of* Ridgewell.) That's how it lies—that's obvious. How she does, doesn't matter.

Ridgewell. My dear Dick, really I must remind you that you're talking about my missus!

Wibley. In the circumstances the possessive pronoun would seem hardly appropriate.

Ridgewell. Oh, I say!—dash it!——

Wibley. Now look here, Bill, I tell you you're taking this matter of Owen with an unnatural calm!

Ridgewell (*carefully replacing the photographs in their original positions*). I don't believe in jumping to conclusions. Because your dug-out in France was smothered in pictures of—what's the woman's name?—that girl in "Tootle-oo," I didn't proceed to suggest that——

Wibley. That's a totally different matter. And if you're going to argue like that, then—er——! (*He rises angrily from his chair, and turns towards the door.*)

(Ridgewell *makes haste to intercept him.*)

(*Both resume their seats.*)

Ridgewell. No, no, Dick! Don't get up in the air, for Heaven's sake! I'm sorry. What d'you want me to tell you?

Wibley. Owen doesn't come to you as a complete surprise.

Ridgewell. No, in a sense I suppose he doesn't.

Wibley. Why not? . . . Was there anything wrong between you and Di before you went out to Mespot?

Ridgewell. No, not exactly wrong, but——

Wibley. But what?

Ridgewell. Ours was a war marriage, as you know. For the first three years of it I only saw Di at intervals—rare intervals—and everything seemed as right as rain. Then came the Armistice and six months at home.

Wibley. Well?

Ridgewell. Well, it didn't take me long to discover that things weren't as right as rain, that it wasn't love, as we'd both thought, that had blinded Di to my comic illustration of a face. It was the glamour of the War—my uniform, and wound, and all the rest of it. . . . As soon as I found out how things stood I didn't say any-

thing—what was the use?—I kept out of her way. (*Laughing a little bitterly.*) I just bit on the bullet. I thought that perhaps some day . . . but my little plan doesn't seem to have worked. My hopes have all gone west.

Wibley. But—good God, man!—you don't mean that you'll give her up without a struggle.

Ridgewell. If she's in love with another man.

Wibley. You'll take her word for that?

Ridgewell. I certainly shan't take anybody else's.

(*A pause.*)

Wibley (*controlling with difficulty his rising temper*). Bill! When you told Di that you were under orders for Mespot, did she raise any objection?

Ridgewell. No; only her eyebrows.

Wibley. She didn't suggest accompanying you?

Ridgewell (*evading a direct answer*). It's no place for a woman.

Wibley. You didn't ask her to come with you?

Ridgewell. I've told you—it's no place for a woman.

(*Another but shorter pause.*)

Wibley. Bill, in the whole course of your married life have you ever put your foot down?

Ridgewell. I—I've endeavoured to meet Di's wishes.

Wibley. And when she's cried for the moon—as every woman will at some time or another—I suppose you've buzzed off in your 'plane to try and get it instead of metaphorically bending her across your knee.

Ridgewell (*startled by the suggestion*). Eh?

Wibley. That's what she's been crying for all the time. She probably doesn't know it. But *you* ought to have known it instinctively. . . . You have me beat, Bill! You don't look the part, I know, but I'll give no man in the Air-Force first over you for courage or for skill in piloting a 'plane. Yet when it comes to dealing with a woman you've the heart of a chicken.

Ridgewell. It's all very well for you to talk, Dick, but——

Wibley. Oh, it's easy to see what's happened! Having got the moon or something like it, Di started to cry for the whole blessed firmament, and the more extravagant her demands the more you sweated to try and gratify 'em! Damn it, man! (*rising and thumping the table with his fist*)—she didn't want 'em gratified. What she did want was to be ticked off, put in her place, mastered!

Ridgewell. Out of the mouths of babes and bachelors——!

Wibley (*emphasizing his words by tapping him on the shoulder*). Shall ye hear wisdom! . . . Let me tell you this, my lad: if married men understood more about women, and bachelors less, they wouldn't be working overtime in the Divorce Court.

Ridgewell. Well, I'm dashed!

Wibley (*moving down* R. *of table*). 'Pon my soul, I begin to feel sorry for Di. Because she was disappointed in you and couldn't help showing it, you got it into your fat head that she was tired of you—ye gods! (*crossing to the fireplace*)—sheered off to Mesopotamia, and thought yourself no end of a fine fellow for having given her the run of your banking account.

Ridgewell (*ruefully*). The shortest run on record!

Wibley. Serve you right! . . . Oh, this explains Owen absolutely! I ought to have tumbled to it before. (*Crossing to* Ridgewell.) Old maids and discontented wives—they both have the same trade-mark.

Ridgewell (*a trifle irritably*). What d'you mean? What trade-mark?

Wibley (*bending towards him, hands on hips*). A tame cat.

(*A considerable pause.* Ridgewell *heaves a deep sigh.*)

Ridgewell. So you think it's all been my fault.

Wibley. Nine-tenths of it.

Ridgewell. And that if only I'd gone the right way to work, Di—well (*propping his elbows on the table, and resting his head in his hands, sighing sadly*)—wouldn't have got quite so bored with me.

(*The pathos in his voice moves* Wibley *to sympathy. He comes back and lays his hand upon* Ridgewell's *shoulder.*)

Wibley. Look here, old chap, I was best man at your wedding. Di was in love with you then—no humbug about it—I'll take my oath of that.

Ridgewell (*wistfully*). Then——

Wibley. They say no man can be a hero to his valet, but—believe me, Bill—it's a damned sight harder for him to be a hero to his wife. Di married you in the belief that you were strong and masterful—a leader of men. Well, so you are. What she didn't realize was that a leader of men and a controller of women are two very different propositions. And when she put you to the test—or what she considered to be the test—you failed her. (*Pausing in front of the table* R.) I tell you, old man, women are kittle cattle. Why d'you suppose they're jibbing at promising to obey their husbands when they marry? Simply to compel those same wretched husbands to *make* 'em obey afterwards. (*Again he thumps the table to emphasize his words.*)

Ridgewell (*leaning his head in hands*). It's all utterly beyond me. But, if you're right—and I suppose you are—it seems to me that my only chance of winning Di back is first of all to own myself a rotter and then to prove it—by giving her a black eye!

Wibley (*laughing*). Metaphorically!

Ridgewell. Oh, it's no use. I shall never be able to do it.

Wibley (*moving to the top of the table* R. *of* Ridgewell). Nonsense! You hold all the cards. Forget you were in the wrong.

Ignore it. Di's given you the chance to put *her* in the wrong. Freeze on to it. Ask her what the devil she means by that letter to you, who the deuce is this chap who's hanging about her skirts. Master her! (*He roars the command like a Sergeant-Major on parade.*)

(Ridgewell *jumps.*)

Master her!

(*His tone is louder still, and* Ridgewell's *jump correspondingly more violent.*)

Unless you do, she'll never come back to you, however much she wants to.

Ridgewell. My dear Dick, as I've said before, it's all very well for a great, strapping chap like you to talk. You haven't got my physical disabilities. How the deuce am I to master a woman who's —who's nearly as tall as I am?

Wibley. Pshaw! What have inches got to do with it? It's mental stature that counts—not physical. Think of Napoleon.

Ridgewell. You might just as well tell me to think of Jimmy Wilde! I'm not Napoleon, and I'm not Jimmy Wilde. And Di isn't a regiment. I can't put her on parade.

Wibley. And this is the man who won the D.S.O.! (*He "flops" into the chair* c. *of the table.*)

Ridgewell. For bravery a damned sight less conspicuous than that you want me to exhibit. (*Starting nervously at the sound of a key turning in the Yale lock of the front door, and springing to his feet.*) There's Di.

(Wibley *rises and moves a step up.*)

No, no, for Heaven's sake don't go! Di hasn't seen you for ages, and——

(*His appeal is brought to an abrupt conclusion by the sound of the opening of the front door. He stands, his back turned to the lobby, fidgeting nervously with various impedimenta of the writing-table. In his agitation he knocks over one of the photographs of "Owen," but is careful immediately to replace it in position.* Wibley, *on the other hand, turns to face the new-comer, who is not* Diana Ridgewell, *as her husband has expected, but a very impressive individual of the male gender, tall, willowy, and graceful, and exceedingly good-looking. It is in fact* Mr. Owen Ffolliott, *by no means the least distinguished member of the ancient family whose head is the tenth Earl of Kensington. This in the opinion of himself and of his friends. I scorn, as he would, to notice the opinion of his enemies.* Mr. Ffolliott *is possessed of a manner that is the hall-mark of those who, by virtue of education at Eton and Balliol, compose the salt of the earth. It is a manner that none else may acquire, and is blended in the most subtle and delicate proportions of languor, insolence,*

exclusiveness and self-complacence. It were impossible to conceive of Mr. Ffolliott *or of any of his kind giving way to anything so vulgar as a display of emotion or of enthusiasm. It were equally impossible to conceive of him raising his voice either in anger or excitement. A slight uplifting of his eyebrows or the compression of the corners of his mouth is all that he permits himself by way of index to his feelings. He smiles but rarely. He laughs never. His hair is dressed with as much care as himself. His hands and his finger-nails are his particular pride. A monocle is the weapon that he employs when occasion requires to annihilate his enemies. He wears a black morning-coat, light trousers, grey tall hat, and white spats above patent leather shoes. The latch-key with which he opens the front door is one of a bunch, secured to his person by a gold chain, that he carries in his trousers pocket. Having taken it from the lock, he slips the bunch back into his pocket, hangs his hat upon the rack, places his cane in the umbrella-stand, and proceeds leisurely to enter the room.* Wibley *snaps thumb and finger to call* Ridgewell's *attention to the phenomenon, at the same time exclaiming sotto voce :*)

Wibley. Here! I say, Bill! What the deuce—— ?

(*Without turning his back,* Ridgewell *motions to his friend to keep his mouth shut.*)

(Ffolliott *saunters into the room. He looks with perfunctory interest at* Wibley, *who, comparing his face with that of the portraits on* Diana's *desk, exclaims significantly, as he comes down* r. *of table :*)

Oh!

(Ffolliott *proceeds leisurely down* c., *to* l. *of* Ridgewell, *who, upon perceiving him, utters a smothered exclamation and starts in nervous discomfiture, whereupon* Ffolliott *desires him blandly :*)

Ffolliott. Pray don't disturb yourself. I didn't know Mrs. Ridgewell was expecting visitors.

Wibley. I'm quite sure you didn't.

(Ffolliott *elevates his eyebrows and regards* Wibley *with cold surprise.*)

Ffolliott. I am gratified. (*He turns again to* Ridgewell.) Is she not at home ?

Ridgewell (*nervously*). Her—er—maid tells us that she's expected back to tea.

Ffolliott (*having consulted his watch*). You have an appointment ?

Wibley (*explosively*). What the—— ?

(*He checks unwillingly upon a sign from* Ridgewell.)

Ridgewell. We're waiting to see Mrs. Ridgewell.

Ffolliott. I'm afraid you may have to wait some time. Her

movements are very uncertain. (*He pauses, the while he helps himself to a cigarette from a silver box upon a side-table down* L., *in the hope that* Ridgewell *and* Wibley *will take the hint and their departure. Seeing that they do neither—but on the contrary seat themselves significantly one on either side of the writing-table—he proceeds :*) However, if you prefer to stay, can I order you some tea ?—or would you rather have a whisky-and-soda ?

Ridgewell (*mildly*). It's very kind of you, but I think on the whole it would be better if *I* were to order the tea and invite *you* to have a whiskey-and-soda.

Ffolliott. Really !—I—I don't understand you. (*Turning his back upon them, and throwing into the grate the match with which he has lit his cigarette.*)

Wibley. No !—and I'm damned if I do either ! (*Behind* Ffolliott's *back he pantomimes to* Ridgewell *to kick him out of the flat.*)

(Ffolliott *turns and comes slowly* C.)

Ffolliott. It might simplify matters if we were to introduce ourselves.

Wibley. There's no necessity so far as you're concerned. You're Owen.

Ffolliott. I beg your pardon.

Wibley (*wagging an accusing finger in the direction of the portrait on the desk*). " Owen to Di " !

Ffolliott. Eh ?

Wibley. And if it were a hundred years ago, and I in somebody else's place, you'd be *goin'* to die !

(Ffolliott *comes to* R.C., *looks him up and down in sheer amazement, then turns inquiringly to* Ridgewell.)

Ffolliott. Would you mind telling me ?—who *is* this extraordinary person ?

Wibley. My name is Wibley, sir—Major of the Gunners—(*rising*) at your service.

Ffolliott. Ah, yes ? . . . You ought to get on. You have the ideal voice and manner for an adjutant.

(*To* Wibley's *manifest annoyance,* Ridgewell *grins his appreciation of this thrust.* Ffolliott *turns again to him.*)

You, sir, I perceive, are a ubiquitarian of a different order.

Ridgewell (*stiffly*). I have the honour to belong to the Air-Force.

Ffolliott. That is what I meant. Mrs. Ridgewell's husband, I believe, is also a flying-man. Do you happen to know him ?

Ridgewell (*grinning at* Wibley). Er—not to speak to.

Ffolliott (*his interest evaporating*). Oh.

Ridgewell. I never talk to myself. (*Rising.*) You see, I *am* Mrs. Ridgewell's husband.

(Ffolliott *does not turn a hair.*)

Ffolliott. Ah! I thought you seemed embarrassed. That explains it. (*Turning away, crossing to* L. *and sitting on the divan.*)

Wibley. Well, I'll be shot!

Ffolliott. An excellent idea!

Ridgewell (*coming up* C.). Mr.—er——

Ffolliott. Ffolliott is my name.

Ridgewell. Mr. Ffolliott, the bell is just beside you. Do you mind pressing it?

Ffolliott. Certainly. (*Rising and pressing the bell beside the fireplace.*) A whisky-and-soda would be most acceptable. (*Turning again, facing* Ridgewell *and* Wibley.) I've no wish to be intrusive, but so far as I'm aware, Mrs. Ridgewell is under the impression that you're still in Mesopotamia. I know she wrote to you there not long ago.

Ridgewell. She did.

Ffolliott (*with upraised eyebrows*). You received her letter. (*Sitting again on the divan, his back to the other two men.*) Then do you think that, in the circumstances, it's quite the thing to—er——?

Ridgewell. To what?

Ffolliott. Well, to—er—to storm her flat with your auxiliaries (*waving a contemptuous hand in the direction of* Wibley) in this manner?

Ridgewell. That is a subject that I'm not prepared to discuss with you.

Ffolliott. Just as you please. We all have our ideas of what is good form and what isn't, I suppose. Personally it wouldn't strike me as being the best of form to thrust myself in where it had been made plain to me that I wasn't—(*he flicks the ash from his cigarette*) wanted.

Ridgewell. Curiously enough the same idea had just occurred to me. That's why I asked you to ring the bell.

Ffolliott. Eh?

(Heatley *enters from the door up* L.)

Ridgewell (*addressing* Heatley). Will you be good enough to show this gentleman to the front door?

(Heatley's *jaw drops in sheer amazement. Her lips move, but no word comes from them. She looks to* Ffolliott, *mutely imploring his direction.*)

Ffolliott. I beg your pardon.

Ridgewell. I think you heard what I said.

Ffolliott (*with a side-glance at* Heatley). I am Mrs. Ridge-

well's guest. I am here at her invitation, and here I shall remain until she comes.

Ridgewell (*with quiet conviction*). I think not.

Wibley (*with satisfaction*). Ah!

(*Recognizing that they will not hesitate to employ force to evict him if he does not leave of his own accord,* Ffolliott *accepts the situation with a shrug of his shoulders.* Ridgewell *signs to* Heatley *to precede him to the front door. She moves forward reluctantly.*)

Ffolliott. There's no need to trouble you, Heatley, thank you. (*Walking in his usual leisurely fashion to the archway.*) Keep an eye on the silver, and tell Mrs. Ridgewell that I'll ring her up this evening.

(Heatley *moves back to service door up* L. Ridgewell *crosses* L. *to fireplace.* Wibley *drops down* R. Ffolliott *proceeds to the front door. He has put on his hat and is removing his cane from the umbrella-stand when the door is opened by a latchkey from without and* Diana Ridgewell *comes into the lobby. She is a tall, slim, graceful woman, whose abundant vitality rebels against the pretence of languid cynicism that, in deference to the style fashionable in her "set," she makes occasional, if half-hearted endeavour to superimpose upon it. Her personality is real and vivid. It seeks expression always in superlatives.* Diana *never does things by halves. When she is angry she is violently angry. As intense as her high spirits are the fits of depression that succeed them. After an outburst of temper in which she loses all control of her tongue she is apt to indulge in a spirit of remorse that swings her to the opposite extreme. She is intensely feminine, as capricious in her moods as is the weather. Her marriage has been a bitter disappointment. The guidance of a strong hand, that, all unconsciously, she sought, has not been hers. The pricks against which she has thought to kick in vain instead of resisting her have telescoped before the impact. Always she has been given her own way, and in the consequence she has developed unwillingly, almost unknowingly, into a law unto herself. She is not what one would call a clever woman, but she has a nice sense of humour, and a pretty wit. Also, she is young, pretty, and—when she chooses to exert it—can exercise great charm of manner. She dresses with taste and distinction, and always a little in advance of the prevailing fashion. Upon opening the door she comes face to face with* Ffolliott, *and greets him with affectionate familiarity.*)

Diana. Hullo, darling.

(Wibley *pulls a grimace at* Ridgewell, *who shuffles uncomfortably upon his feet.*)

Just arrived?

Ffolliott (*laconically*). Just going.

Diana. Why? Naughty temper 'cos I've kept him waiting?

(*She pats him playfully upon the cheek.* Ridgewell *and* Wibley *exchange glances.*)

Ffolliott. I don't like the company you keep.

Diana. Sweetest heart!

(*Again* Wibley *grimaces and again* Ridgewell *writhes.*)

Isn't it a little early to be wearing vine-leaves in your hair?

Ffolliott. A deputation from the Near East awaits you. Militarism stalks rampant in your hall.

(Diana *darts a quick look at him as though suspecting his sanity, then holds aside the curtain that screens the pillars of the archway, and pops her head into the hall. Upon seeing her husband she exclaims in amazement and runs to greet him, coming down* c. *to the right extremity of the divan.* Ffolliott *hangs up his hat, closes the front door, and stands in the archway, regarding* Diana's *reception by her husband with detached and cynical amusement.* Heatley *exits door up* l.)

Diana. Bill! My *dear*! This is too wonderful! The last person in the world I expected to see.

Ridgewell (*awkwardly*). How are you, Di?

Diana. Flourishing. And you? (*Taking his hand and bending forward to kiss him, then recoiling with an exclamation.*) Oh! Gracious! I nearly kissed you.

Ridgewell. Er—why not quite?

Diana. Well, you see, it's rather awkward. Mr. Archer—that's my solicitor . . . But, never mind, we'll talk about that later. . . . Tell me!—whatever's brought you back to England?

(*Behind her back* Wibley *throws up his hands and lifts his eyes to heaven.*)

Ridgewell (*reproachfully*). You've no idea?

Diana. Not the faintest. . . . Promotion? They're going to make you an Air-Marshal?

Ridgewell (*shaking his head*). You wrote me a letter.

Diana. You don't mean to tell me you've come all this way just to answer that? . . . It's very sweet of you, Bill dear, but really you shouldn't have troubled. A postcard to say "Yes" would have done just as well.

(*A strange sound that* Wibley *strangles in his throat causes her to turn in his direction.*)

Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't know . . . Gracious!—if it isn't Dick! How nice of you to come and see me after all these years. How are you, Dick?

Wibley. Staggered! (*He crushes her hand in his.*)

Diana (*wringing her bruised fingers*). Oo! . . . You always did believe in coming to grips straight away, didn't you? . . . What's the matter now, Dick?

Wibley (*grimly*). That's for your husband to tell you. (*He walks behind the divan to the fireplace.*)

Diana. Well, if it's something nasty, Bill, please wait until I've had my tea. I'm simply dying for a cup. . . . Will you press the bell, Dick?

(Wibley *obliges, and then goes leisurely up to* R. *of staircase.*)

(Diana *turns aside, and, in doing so, observes with astonishment that* Ffolliott *has not followed her into the room, but has remained in the lobby.*)

What on earth are you standing there for, Owen? Why don't you come in? (*Crossing to the* L. *of the writing-table.*)

Ffolliott (*taking a step forward*). You don't appear to appreciate the delicacy of the situation, Diana. Am I to obey you or your husband? You tell me to come in He told me to—er—get out.

Diana (*puckering her brow*). Did you, Bill? . . . But how *too* extraordinary of you!

Ridgewell. My dear Di!—(*moving towards her at* C.) really—there are limits.

Diana. There are, Bill. And when it comes to turning *my* friends out of *my* flat——!

Ridgewell. My flat, also, please remember.

Diana. Well, of course, if you choose to stand upon your legal rights—shall we say *our* flat? But at least half of it is mine, and I insist upon *my* right to entertain my friends in it. You and Dick can have the fireside end, and Owen and I will occupy the other. . . . Come in, Owen.

Ffolliott. You insist?

Diana. Certainly.

(Ffolliott *bows and obeys, coming down* R. *of the table.*)

(Heatley *enters up* L., *and stands awaiting orders.*)

What is it, Heatley?

Heatley. You rang, madam.

Diana. Oh, yes. I wanted some tea, but it'll have to wait. (*Glancing obliquely and slyly at her husband, who is too absorbed in his own thoughts to observe her.*) Bring me two aspirins and a glass of water.

Ridgewell (*moving towards her in concern*). My dear! You've got a headache?

Diana. Splitting.

Ridgewell. Well, won't you go and lie down for a bit? I can either wait here, or come back later, or——

Diana (*majestically*). No, no. It's quite all right, thank you. (*She sits in chair* L. *of table.*)

(Ridgewell *crosses* L. *to below the divan.*)

Heatley. Anything further, madam?

Diana. No, thank you. . . . Oh, yes! Take my hat.

(Heatley *obeys and is moving towards the service door when* Ffolliott *checks her.*)

Ffolliott. Oh, Heatley! You might bring me a whisky-and-soda, will you?

Heatley. Very good, sir.

(*She goes out.*)

(Wibley *comes down stage* R. *of* Ridgewell, *and demands of him, more or less sotto voce:*)

Wibley. Are you going to stand for this?

(Ridgewell *braces himself, moves over to* Diana, *and addresses her, with decision.*)

Ridgewell. Diana!

Diana (*with disarming sweetness*). William! (*She looks languishingly into his eyes. He melts immediately.*)

Ridgewell. I don't want to worry you when you're not feeling well, but—dash it!—Mr. Ffolliott let himself in with a latchkey.

Diana. Did he? . . . Well, you see, the front door's so stupid. We've tried to train it to obey when we say "Open Sesame!" but somehow we can't make it understand.

Ridgewell. It's all very well to make a joke of it, but surely you must realize that—er——

Diana (*coldly*). That what?

Ridgewell. Well, that—er—that—to say the least of it—the situation is—er—open to misconception.

Diana. What exactly do you mean, Bill?

Wibley (*coming down* L. *of* Ridgewell *and facing* Diana). He means that, as a general rule, a latchkey is the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible—er—intimacy.

Diana. Really, Major Wibley——!

Ffolliott. Incredible!

Ridgewell. No, no, no, no, Dick! I didn't mean anything of the sort. Please don't misinterpret me.

(Wibley *retires into the background with a snort of disgust.*)

Diana. I'm very glad, Bill, that you repudiate Major Wibley's abominable suggestion. If you hadn't, I—er——

Ridgewell (*hurriedly*). Yes, yes, quite. Well, I'm sure that

there's some perfectly simple and reasonable explanation of how the latchkey came into Mr. Ffolliott's possession.

Wibley (*sotto voce, but sufficiently loudly to be heard by* Ridgewell). Ass!

(Heatley *enters, carrying upon a salver two tablets of aspirin, a glass of water, and a whisky-and-soda.*)

Diana. It's the simplest thing in the world—to anybody who's not got a—a perverted mind. (*Glaring at* Wibley, *then turning to her maid.*) Oh, thank you, Heatley.

(Heatley *hands the whisky-and-soda to* Ffolliott, *and then stands beside her mistress on her* r., *holding the salver out towards her.*)

Ffolliott. Thanks.

Diana (*to* Ridgewell). If you've read the papers lately you'll have seen that I've been doing a lot of organization work for charity matinées, and dances and so on. (*During this speech she takes one aspirin and a sip of water.*)

Ridgewell (*feebly*). Yes?

Diana. You can have no idea of the amount of work that it's entailed. (*Swallowing the second aspirin.*) I've sent out thousands upon thousands of circulars, and had as many as a hundred letters to answer in a day. (*She replaces the glass upon the salver.* Heatley *departs with it.*)

Wibley (*to* Ridgewell). Now you know why yours have been overlooked.

(Ridgewell *signs to him to cease from interrupting.* Diana *freezes him with a stare.*)

Diana. In the ordinary way I should have been obliged to engage a secretary at goodness only knows how much a week. (*Taking a cigarette from a box upon the table.*) But Mr. Ffolliott nobly volunteered (*striking a match*) to take the whole thing on his shoulders—for love!—er—I mean for nothing. (*Lighting her cigarette.*) He's saved us hundreds and hundreds of pounds. What I should have done without him I don't know. (*Smiling upon* Ffolliott.) He's been a positive godsend.

Ffolliott. Is all this quite necessary, Diana?

Diana (*with emphasis*). Yes, Owen, it is. In view of Major Wibley's disgraceful innuendos——

Ffolliott. Personally, I should have thought that silent contempt——

Wibley. If you have any more thoughts of that description, my lad, I should recommend you to keep them to yourself.

Ridgewell (*intervening nervously*). Aren't we straying a little from the point? You were explaining about the latchkey, Diana.

Diana. Oh, yes—the latchkey. Of course. Well—don't you see?—all the papers and things were kept here. It was most important that Mr. Ffolliott should be able to get at them whenever

he wanted to. He could never be sure of finding me in. My work was mostly outside, and so—well—that's how we arranged things. (*Again she smiles upon* Ffolliott, *who raises his glass to her.*)

Ridgewell (*dubiously*). I see.

Wibley (*unable to contain himself a moment longer*). Do you? Then you see a jolly sight more than I do! (*Coming to the* L. *of* Diana, *and, although addressing his questions to* Ridgewell, *plainly firing them at her.*) Has Mrs. Ridgewell no bell at her front door?—no maid to answer it?

Diana. I don't see why *you* should question me, Major Wibley. But, as a matter of fact, I was without a maid for a considerable time.

Wibley. I did not presume to question you, Mrs. Ridgewell. I was careful to address my inquiry to your husband. . . . And here's another thing that I should like to ask him: Since when has it become the correct thing for women—married women—to have male secretaries, and to address them as "darling," and—let's see, what was it?—"sweetest heart"? (*Stamps up stage indignantly.*)

Diana (*rises and exclaims in impotent fury*). O-oh!

Ridgewell (*following* Wibley *up stage*). I really think, Dick, that it would be better if we were to deal with one thing at a time.

Wibley (*advancing threateningly upon* Ridgewell, *who backs down stage again*). Oh, you do, do you? Well, I quite agree. There's only one thing that *requires* dealing with, but you haven't the guts to do it. You actually allow it to sit there (*waving an indignant hand in the direction of* Ffolliott, *who is sipping his drink with an air of insolent amusement*) grinning its flabby insults at you instead of pitching it neck and crop downstairs. I'm through with you, Bill. You deserve all that's coming to you—*and—you'll—get it!* If you can swallow so easily a tale that wouldn't deceive a jury of mutton-heads, then I don't suppose you'll feel the slightest discomfort in wearing the very handsome pair of antlers with which your wife's presented you! (*He snatches up his hat and bangs out of the room, closing the front door after him.*)

(Ridgewell *collapses on to the divan.*)

Ffolliott. What a charming exhibition of good breeding!

Diana (*almost crying from rage and mortification as she moves first towards her husband and then up to the archway*). Oh, it's intolerable!—outrageous! I've never been so insulted in my life. And you two *men* (*stressing the word scornfully*) sit there and actually let it pass without a protest! . . . O-oh! (*She dumps herself down in the chair* L. *of the table.*)

Ffolliott. My dear Di, with your husband present, it would hardly have been becoming upon my part to—er——

Ridgewell (*quietly decisive*). Mr. Ffolliott!

Ffolliott (*with an insolent drawl*). Ye-es?

Ridgewell. Do you think you could find your way to the front door without my ringing for the maid to show it you again?

(Ffolliott *stares at him arrogantly, then speaks over his shoulder to* Diana.)

Ffolliott. D'you want a tête-à-tête, Di?

Diana (*tonelessly*). You'd better go.

Ffolliott. Right ho. (*Rising languidly, and strolling towards the lobby, taking a cigarette from his case as he does so.*) I'll call you up on the 'phone later in the evening. . . . Au revoir; and many thanks for a most amusing afternoon.

Ridgewell (*rising*). Mr. Ffolliott!

Ffolliott (*as before*). Ye-es? (*He comes a step down* c.)

Ridgewell. Now that your secretarial duties are at an end, you won't have any further use for a latchkey.

(Diana *looks at him sharply and curiously.*)

Perhaps you'll be good enough to leave it behind.

(Diana *rises.* Ffolliott *gives her an inquiring glance. She nods to him to comply with the request. He detaches the key from his chain with irritating slowness.*)

Give it to me, please.

(Ffolliott *holds out the key in his left hand.*)

Diana. To me!

(*She darts forward in order to obtain possession of it, but* Ridgewell *is too quick for her. He slips the key into the pocket of his tunic.*)

Ridgewell (*to* Ffolliott). Thank you. . . . Good-bye. (*Moving to the fireplace.*)

(Ffolliott *smiles contemptuously upon the back that* Ridgewell *turns to him, then, with a shrug of the shoulders, takes his departure.*)

(*There follows a considerable pause, during which* Diana, *her nerves and her temper strained to the uttermost, paces the floor. She goes first towards her husband, as though she would annihilate him, then towards the lobby, as though she would call back* Ffolliott, *and returns finally to her chair* l. *of the table in which she seats herself with a half-scream of sheer exasperation.* Ridgewell *summons up the courage to address her.*)

Ridgewell (*timidly appealing, as he moves slightly* c.). Di!

Diana (*coldly unresponsive*). Will you give me that key, please?

Ridgewell. You have one of your own.

Diana. You don't require it.

Ridgewell. Di——!

Diana (*imperiously*). The key, please!

Ridgewell. So you don't want me to come here.

Diana (*as one hardly able to believe her ears*). To *come here*! You actually thought of coming here?

Ridgewell (*humbly*). Well, I thought, perhaps, that so long as I remain your husband——

Diana. After my letter to you, after the revelations that have been made this afternoon, you'd be willing to condone my infidelity?

Ridgewell (*reproachfully*). Di!

Diana (*challengingly*). Don't you believe I've been unfaithful to you?

Ridgewell (*loyally*). No.

Diana (*rising and letting herself go*). Then why did you bring that brute Wibley to bully and insult me, let him insult my guest, let him insult *you*? Why were you afraid to come and see me alone? . . . Tsch! You're not a man at all! You're not even a mouse! (*Turning her back on him contemptuously.*)

Ridgewell (*with a twisted smile*). Yet I seem to have married a shrew.

Diana (*stung*). Thank you! . . . Well, if you come here you'll oblige me to go elsewhere—that's all.

(*A pause.* Ridgewell *answers her slowly.*)

Ridgewell. Then, of course, I won't come here. (*Sadly, sitting on the divan.*)

(Diana *is touched by the pathos in his voice. Her anger against him vanishes. Remorse and pity take its place.*)

Diana (*coming to* c.). Bill! I'm sorry! I lost my temper. I didn't mean to say that about the mouse. (*Returning to* l. *of table.*)

Ridgewell. You were quite right, my dear. I'm not even a mouse. I wish I were. Women are afraid of mice.

Diana (*unable to keep a shade of contempt out of her voice*). You talk as though *you* were afraid of *women.*

Ridgewell (*simply*). I am.

(*A pause.*)

Diana. Is that why you ran away from me?

Ridgewell. I didn't run away from you. At least I didn't mean to. I thought you'd be happier without me. (*Wistfully.*) Haven't you been? (*He looks at her in puzzled fashion. Her face is averted.*)

Diana. I've never known what it is to be with you—not really.

Ridgewell (*a light shining in his eyes, rising impulsively and moving towards her, a new hope in his voice*). Di!

Diana (*hurriedly—scenting danger*). Oh, but we mustn't become sentimental. . . . A lot of water has flowed under the bridges in the last two years, Bill, and it's washed away everything—even

regrets. (*Moving so as to come eye to eye with him.*) But I want you to believe that I've never been unfaithful to you—never in deed.

Ridgewell (*low-voiced and steadily*). I do believe that, Di.

Diana (*in similar tone*). Thank you.

(*A pause.*)

(*Continuing briskly.*) And now about the future——

Ridgewell (*looking away from her and straight ahead of him*). You still want to divorce me?

Diana (*nodding*). It's asking a lot, I know. But, you see, if you were to divorce me——

Ridgewell. That doesn't come into the question. (*Hesitatingly.*) I suppose it's no use asking if we couldn't start again. If——

Diana (*firmly*). Not a bit, Bill.

Ridgewell. You're in love with that—with your late secretary?

Diana. Am I?

Ridgewell. Aren't you?

Diana. I don't know. I hope not. Marriage is essentially a business contract, and one should never let sentiment enter into business.

Ridgewell. So, if you divorce me, you intend to marry him.

Diana. Yes.

Ridgewell (*slowly and painfully*). Very well, then it shall be as you wish.

(Diana *laughs a shade hysterically.*)

(*Looking at her in surprise.*) Why do you laugh?

Diana. I was thinking of a story that I read the other day called "Mr. and Mrs. Dove." (*Her eyes stray towards the inkstand on the writing-table.*)

Ridgewell (*blankly*). A story?

Diana. Two doves in a cage—the story of their lives—Mr. and Mrs. (*Picking up two quill pens that lie on the writing-table before her—one with plumes of red to represent "Mr. Dove," one with plumes of white to represent "Mrs. Dove." The first she takes in her left hand, the second in her right, and to these she gives action to illustrate her story.*) "She laughs and runs away from him. He follows, bowing, bowing, bowing, to the end of the chapter." . . . That's all. (*The red-plumed pen falls from her fingers to the floor.*)

(*A brief pause, during which* Ridgewell *puzzles his brains to read her parable aright. Then he stoops to recover the pen and to restore it to her.*)

Ridgewell (*proffering the pen*). Excuse me.

Diana. Oh—oh, thank you.

(*She laughs again queerly. The laugh swells to a peal.* Ridgewell

joins in the merriment, but his face grows grave and puzzled again the moment that his back is turned to her.)

(*Follows a ringing of the front-door bell.*)

(HEATLEY *enters to answer it from door up* L. DIANA *checks her progress to the door.*)

If it's a caller, Heatley, I'm not at home.

HEATLEY. Very good, madam.

(RIDGEWELL *crosses to the fireplace.* HEATLEY *proceeds to the front door, and opens it. A voice inquires of her from without:*)

ARCHER. Is Mrs. Ridgewell in?

HEATLEY. No, sir. She's not at home.

ARCHER (*in tone of considerable surprise*). Are you quite sure? I have an appointment with her.

DIANA (*rising*). Oh, gracious! It's Mr. Archer. I'd forgotten all about him. (*Running to the archway and calling:*) Heatley! It's all right. I *am* at home to Mr. Archer, but not to anybody else.

ARCHER (*in tone of satisfaction*). Ah!

(HEATLEY *stands aside to permit him to enter. He hands her his silk hat and his cane. The one she hangs upon the rack; the other she places in the stand.*)

Thank you. (*Coming into the room down* C., *beaming, and extending a white and plump hand to* DIANA.)

(MR. ARCHER *can be very gracious when circumstances so dispose him; also he can be very much the contrary, as his clerks and his home-circle know to their cost. His smile and his frown are both Olympian, but the former he reserves for his clients, the latter for his family and staff. His manner and appearance are canonical. So is his voice. It has the canon's boom. On occasion such as the present he has all the urbanity of a Rural Dean. He has grown portly in prosperity, but that he finds an asset in the exercise of his profession. It attracts a host of clients, who, like Cæsar, mistrust the man of lean and hungry look. He wears his professional garb of black morning-coat and vest, dark striped trousers, a black silk tie relieved by a pearl pin, and tortoiseshell-rimmed pince-nez.*)

ARCHER (*as he shakes hands with* DIANA). Ah, dear lady!—a little polite fiction, eh? You wanted to make sure that we should not be disturbed. Quite right. Quite right.

(HEATLEY *goes out by door up* L.)

DIANA. Allow me to introduce you to my husband—Mr. Archer, my solicitor.

(RIDGEWELL *bows.*)

(Archer *gasps. For a brief second his geniality deserts him.*)

Archer. Your—er—*husband* ? !
Diana (*nodding brightly*). Yes.

(Archer *recovers his equipoise without seeming effort. He beams upon her.*)

Archer. Ah, no, no, dear lady ! You mean your brother-in-law, surely—or possibly a cousin of your husband, who has a strong family likeness to him.

Diana. I don't mean anything of the sort. I mean my husband. (*She sits* c. *of table, and motions to* Archer *to take the chair upon her* r.)

Archer. But I understood you to tell me that your husband had—er—(*addressing* Ridgewell) you will forgive me if I express myself bluntly, sir—deserted you.

Diana. No, no, I didn't tell you that he *had.* I told you that I felt sure he *would*—if I put it to him nicely. And he's going to. Isn't it sweet of him ? He's come all the way from Mesopotamia to tell me so.

Archer (*horrified*). But, my dear lady—really ! Really ! You mustn't tell me things of that sort.

Diana. Why not ?

Archer. Have you never heard the dread word—Collusion ?

Diana (*reflectively*). Collusion ? . . . Col-lusion ? . . . Oh, yes. It means—er—conspiring with somebody to—er—cr—defeat the ends of justice—doesn't it ?

Archer. Precisely.

Diana. Well ?

Archer (*with an expansive gesture*). We-ll !

Diana. Do you mean that Bill and I are—er—colliding ?—I mean colluding !

Archer. No, no, no, dear lady, not for one moment ! Naturally, I—er—I quite appreciate the situation—that is—cr—speaking as your friend. But as your solicitor I am bound to consider how a judge might regard it.

Diana. He must be a funny sort of judge if he expects us to do anything else. Surely, if he's had any experience of the Divorce Court, he must *know* that people collude—that is if they're nice people. . . . You'll be suggesting next that he'll insist upon Bill giving me real bruises that I can show in the witness-box. . . . After all, we're supposed to be civilized.

Archer. I don't think you quite get my meaning, Mrs. Ridgewell. What a judge knows is of no importance——

Ridgewell. Oh, come, come, Mr. Archer !

Archer (*clearing his throat reprovingly*). Ahem !—so long as he does not know it officially.

Ridgewell. Ah, no, no, he mustn't give the show away. As

you said, yourself, Di, we're *supposed* to be civilized. It's part of a judge's job to keep the supposition going.

Archer. I don't wish to obtrude my own position upon you, dear lady, but—er—by the etiquette of my profession, I also am precluded—that is to say I am precluded in my official capacity—from having cognizance of any—er—irregularity.

Diana. Well, the whole thing strikes me as being very stupid. But, after all, it really doesn't matter. Present company excepted, there's nobody need know anything about it.

Archer. Oh, pardon me, dear lady. Your maid——

Diana. Heatley?

Archer. If that is her name.

Diana. Oh, you needn't worry about Heatley. She won't know anything that I don't want her to know. She's devoted to me.

Archer. I have known the witness-box to put a severe strain upon devotion. If I might suggest, a slight increase in wages——

Diana. Bribe my own servant?

Archer (*raising his hand*). No, no, dear lady, no!—reward her devotion.

Diana. Quite unnecessary.

Archer. Well, it must be for you to decide. And, after all, such a course certainly has its disadvantages. . . . I fear we must reconcile ourselves to a measure of delay.

Diana. What in?

Archer. In suing for the restitution of—er—conjugal rights. We shall certainly be avoiding all possible pitfalls if your husband's desertion operates as from to-day, and we postpone our appeal to him to return until a month from this date.

Diana. Oh, only a month! Oh, that'll suit me very well. As a matter of fact, it wouldn't be at all convenient for me to appear in Court before then. I've got so many other engagements.

Archer. It will be a matter of at least two months before the petition will come on for hearing.

Diana. Why?

Archer. The congestion of the Courts. All these war-marriages, you know, they—er——

Ridgewell. Ah! What did *you* do in the Great War, Daddy?

(Diana's *elevated eyebrows express her disdain of such levity. She expostulates to* Archer.)

Diana. But that'll take us into October.

Archer. At the earliest. . . . Given good luck, we might secure a hearing on—er—(*he consults a pocket diary*) er—October 24th. Fourteen days later will bring us to—er—November the seventh.

Ridgewell (*reflectively—as though committing the date to memory*). November the seventh. (*Moving to the fireplace.*)

Archer. If your husband has not returned to you by then——

Diana. But I'm supposed to be going to Paris in October.

Everything's fixed up. Is there no way——? (*Rising, and compelling* Archer, *as the perfect lawyer, to do likewise.*)

Archer. I'm afraid not.

(Diana *shrugs surrender to the inevitable.* Archer *addresses himself to* Ridgewell.)

Now you, sir, decline positively and finally to return to your wife.

Ridgewell. So I gather.

(Archer *turns to* Diana.)

Archer. Although you, madam, have left no stone unturned to secure a reversal of that decision—have left no avenue of persuasion unexplored.

(Diana *nods assent, looking whimsically at* Ridgewell *out of the corners of her eyes.*)

Ridgewell (*derisively, in imitation of a newsboy's cry*). 'Fishul!

Archer. Well, now that we have your respective positions clearly defined, I suggest that we set them down in black and white—draft a couple of letters embodying them.

Ridgewell. But, here—I say!—what about "the dread word"?

Archer. Um—er—it must be clearly understood, of course, that I am acting in this matter solely as—er—the friend—if I may claim to be so regarded—the friend of both parties, and without prejudice to the interests of either.

Ridgewell. Very generous of you.

Archer. Pray don't mention it, Commander. I am only too happy to save you expense.

Ridgewell. But I had a sort of idea that as the—er—erring party, I should be required to pay the costs of the application.

Archer (*deprecatingly*). Well, well, that is no reason why we should add to those costs.

Ridgewell. You are an ornament to your profession, sir.

(Archer *beams and bows.*)

Archer. Now, Mrs. Ridgewell, shall we start with your letter? (*He moves to the centre of the writing-table, and motions to* Diana *and to* Ridgewell *to seat themselves on his right and left respectively. This done, he places blotting-pad, inkstand, etc., before* Diana.) Thank you. . . . Now, let's see, the date is—er——

Diana (*indicating a desk calendar*). August the twenty-ninth.

Archer. Then make it—er—(*referring again to his pocket-diary*) September the twenty-sixth. That will be exactly a month from to-day.

(Diana *writes.*)

How do you usually address your husband?

Diana. I generally call him Bill.

Archer. Have you no—er—no pet name for him?

Diana. I used to call him "Bugface" when we were engaged.

Archer. No, no, I don't think "Bugface" would be quite—er—expedient. Something a trifle more poetical.

Ridgewell. Well, why not "Mugface"? That mayn't be poetical, but at least it's an accurate description.

Diana (*with decision*). I shall just put "dear Bill——"

Archer. No, no. May I suggest that you transpose the words? —"Bill, dear——" . . . The less formal and the more appealing the style in a document of this sort the better.

Diana. Oh, very well. (*Writing.*) "Bill, dear——"

Archer (*dictating*). "It is now"—er—— (*Inquiring of* Ridgewell.) Two years, is it not?—since you went to Mesopotamia.

Ridgewell. As near as makes no matter.

Archer. Then let us say—er—"*close* upon two years." . . . Have you got that, Mrs. Ridgewell?

Diana. Yes.

Archer (*proceeding with the dictation*). "Since you left me to—go to Mesopotamia——"

Diana. How many esses?

Archer. One.

Diana. Thank you.

Archer. "And although"—er—"I have written to you—many times——"

Diana. You're going too fast. "Written to you——" What comes after that?

Archer. "Many times."

Diana (*repeating*). "Many times."

Archer (*nodding confirmation*). "Many times."

Diana. How many "many times"?

Archer. Er—*once* "many times."

Diana. Thank you.

Archer (*dictating more slowly*). "To suggest—that I—should join you there——"

Diana. Yes?

Archer. "You have always found—some pretext—to make—such a proceeding—appear inexpedient."

Diana (*laying down her pen*). I should never dream of putting it like that. What I should say is: "You've always found some excuse to put me off."

Archer. Well, well, dear lady, mine is merely a suggestion. So long as you get the—er—the sense of the words——

Ridgewell. Or the nonsense!

Diana (*laughing sympathetically*). Poor old Bill! (*To* Archer.) All right. Go on.

Archer. Let's see, where are we?

Ridgewell. We're still here.

Archer (*coughing his disapproval of such levity*). Ahem! . . .

Ah, yes, yes. I remember. . . . "The tone of your replies—has hurt me deeply——"

Ridgewell (*turning away*). Oh, go on! Don't mind me!

Archer. A mere figure of speech, Commander. . . . "And has left me—with an uneasy feeling—that"—er—"your excuses—for wishing to keep me—in England—have not been genuine."

Diana (*as she writes*). "—keep me in England have not been" what?

Archer. "Genuine." . . . Take your time, dear lady, but don't write too carefully. Let the letter appear to be the spontaneous outburst of a *neglected* woman.

(*He emphasizes the word "neglected" in his best forensic style by striking his clenched fist upon the table, thus causing a blot to fall from* Diana's *newly filled pen on to the sheet of paper on which she is writing. Recovered from the start that he has given her, she laughs and points it out to him.*)

Diana. Then a blot won't matter.

Archer. A tear-drop would be preferable.

Ridgewell. That's easy. Put it in the bath, and let the tap drip on to it. (*He laughs uproariously. The others glare at him. His laugh is frozen in mid-course. He turns aside.*)

Archer (*gravely reproving*). Please, please, Commander! . . . Um—er—let me see, what were the last words?

Diana (*reading*). "Your excuses for wishing to keep me in England have not been genuine."

Archer. Ah, yes. . . . "My suspicions—have become a certainty—now—that I have discovered—that you have been in London—for a month—and have not—been to see me."

(Ridgewell *sighs in exasperation, leans back in his chair, and lights a cigarette.*)

"A wife's place—is by her husband's side."

Ridgewell (*with emphasis*). I quite agree.

Diana. Oh, please don't interrupt, Bill, there's a dear. I'm getting so muddled.

Archer. "If I—have been in any way—to blame—I ask you—to forgive—and to forget."

(Ridgewell *makes a gesture of comic exasperation.*)

"If only—you will return to me—I will do my utmost—to make amends."

Diana. "A-men."

Archer. No, no!—"Amends."

Diana. Oh.

Archer (*emotionally*). "Come back to me, Bill—if not—for my sake—then—for the sake—of our little ones."

(Ridgewell *gives a hoot of derisive laughter.* Diana *swings round in her chair.*)

Diana. My good man! You know perfectly well there are no little ones.

Archer (*taken aback*). Eh? . . . Oh, no, no, of course not. I do beg your pardon, Mrs. Ridgewell. Force of habit, I'm afraid. I must have been thinking of another case. . . . And I suppose that there's no—er—no likelihood of—er——

Diana (*with asperity*). My husband has been in Mesopotamia for the last two years!

Archer. Oh, yes, yes, so he has. Still it's a pity. The cry of the children, you know. It's always a good touch.

Diana (*impatiently*). Shall we finish the letter?

Archer. In the circumstances I think we may regard it as finished. You've made a separate paragraph of "Come back to me, Bill," haven't you?

Diana. Yes.

Archer. Then just add an exclamation-mark, and sign it, will you? . . . Thank you. . . . May I see it?

(Diana *hands him the letter. He appraises it.* Ridgewell, *attempting to do likewise, is frozen by a look.*)

Yes, yes, I think we shall be able to add one or two little touches later on that will improve this considerably. But it will do quite well for a model. (*Returning it to her.*) And now, Commander Ridgewell, will *you* be good enough to write? (*He places ink and paper before him, and gives him the red-feathered quill.*)

Ridgewell (*twisting the quill in his fingers with whimsical appreciation*). Anything to oblige.

Archer. Thank you. . . . Ahem! . . . Better date *your* letter September the twenty-eighth.

Ridgewell. Right.

Archer. Are you ready?

Ridgewell. Steady! (*He makes ostentatious exchange of the red feather for the white.*) Go!

Archer. "My dear"—er—— (*Looking interrogatively at* Diana.)

Diana. Di.

Archer. "Di"—thank you. . . . "I have your letter—of September the twenty-sixth—and regret—that after—the most careful consideration—I am unable—to accede—to your request—yours—Bill."

Diana. Is that all?

Archer. All that is necessary.

Diana. You're lucky, Bill.

(Ridgewell *rises from the desk and tosses the note to* Archer.)

Ridgewell. There you are. (*Crossing to* L.C.)

Archer (*rising*). Oh, no, no, my dear sir. I shan't require it—as yet. (*Giving it back to* Ridgewell.) And—er—by the way, you will be careful to copy it out on to another sheet of paper—won't you?—and to address it from the hotel, or club, or wherever it is that you are staying? It would hardly do for your wife's letter and your reply to bear the same address.

Ridgewell. That's all right. (*He slips the note into his wallet.*) After I've sent it to Di, what's the next move?

Archer. We shall apply to the Court for an order for restitution which you will be required to obey within fourteen days.

Ridgewell. Required to disobey, you mean.

Archer. Well, well, which you *will* disobey.

Ridgewell. And then?

Archer. In due course you will spend a week-end on the river or by the sea in—er—pleasant company, and we shall sue for divorce on the grounds of desertion and—ahem!—misconduct.

Ridgewell. Ah! That's where the pleasant company comes in, I take it!

Archer. Precisely. (*Moving towards the table.*)

Ridgewell. Hum! (*Turning aside, and, facing the audience, saying sotto voce:*) November the seventh! Seven's my lucky number. What a joke! (*Again questioning* Archer.) I suppose nobody's ever been known to obey the order to return.

Archer. My *dear* sir! Such a thing is unheard of. Why, it would amount almost to—er—to contempt of court. . . . And, now, really, if you will excuse me, I must be returning to my office. (*He consults his watch.*) Oh, dear, dear! . . . Good afternoon, Commander Ridgewell (*they shake hands*), and many thanks to you for your—er——

Ridgewell. Collusion?

Archer. No, no—er—co-operation. . . . Mrs. Ridgewell, could you spare me—er—just one minute?

Ridgewell. Shall I go?

Diana. No, don't you move, Bill. I'll see Mr. Archer to the door. (*Rising and proceeding to the front door, and holding it open.*)

Archer. Thank you. . . . Good afternoon, Commander. (*He wags a finger at him, and repeats jocosely:*) Co-operation! (*Chuckling, he follows* Diana *into the lobby, where they carry on a conversation in dumb show.*)

(Ridgewell *seats himself on the divan, and, elbow on knees, chin cupped in hands, becomes lost in unhappy thought. He does not move from that position even when* Diana, *having shown* Archer *out, comes back into the room. It is possible that he is not aware of her return. She watches him for a while with that same whimsical smile with which she has regarded him on several occasions, then challenges him.*)

Diana (*down* C.). A penny!

Ridgewell. I was thinking of your story of "Mr. and Mrs. Dove."

Diana (*her smile broadening as she glances at the quills upon the table*). Oh.

Ridgewell. I was wondering what would have happened if another bird had got into the cage, a bird at whom Mrs. Dove didn't laugh and from whom she didn't run away. Would Mr. Dove still have gone on bowing, to the end of the chapter?

Diana (*nodding*). He'd have bowed himself out of the cage. (*She crosses to the table, picks up the letter that she wrote at* Archer's *dictation, and reads it carefully.*)

Ridgewell. And left the field clear for the other fellow?

Diana. Don't you think so?

Ridgewell. How do *I* know?

(Diana *shrugs her shoulders and affects to be absorbed in the letter that she is reading.*)

(*Rising and taking his hat and cane from the small table above the divan upon which he placed them when he came into the room*). Di!

Diana (*without looking up*). Yes?

Ridgewell. Can I get a bus from here to the Times Book Club?

Diana. What d'you want from the Times Book Club?

Ridgewell (*slowly*). Well, your story about doves has made me feel it's time I read (*with emphasis*) "The Way of an Eagle." (*Turning on his heel and going swiftly from the room.*)

(*The front door closes upon him with a bang. The letter that* Diana *has been reading falls from her fingers to the writing-table. She turns a startled face to the audience.*)

The Curtain *falls.*

ACT II

The CURTAIN *rises upon the same scene, unoccupied and completely in darkness save for the glow from a fire dying upon the hearth, the faint light that shines through the fan-light over the front door, and the still fainter reflection from the street lamps that filters through the curtained windows.*

(*Silence is broken by the trill of an electric bell. Nobody is roused. It trills again. Again silence succeeds. A key rattles in the lock of the front door. The door is opened. A shadowy figure enters and switches on the light in the lobby.* RIDGEWELL *appears in the archway. His hand seeks and finds the electric switch beside it. The hall is illuminated. He stands for a while, his hand still upon the switch, listening for the sound of movement either in an adjacent room or overhead. None is forthcoming. After a moment's hesitation he tiptoes up the stairs and along the landing to the door of his wife's room, and puts his ear to the jamb. Hearing no sound, he turns the handle very cautiously and as cautiously opens the door. He switches on the light. The room is empty. He grunts, and comes slowly down the stairs to the centre of the stage. He wears an overcoat with velvet collar over evening dress. A white silk scarf is twisted about his neck, and a silk hat set at a rakish angle upon his head. It is evident that he has dined, perhaps not unwisely, but assuredly well. It is the eleventh hour of the fourteenth day since his wife obtained an order for the restitution of conjugal rights, and stimulated by an indulgence unusual with him, he has come with a muddle-headed idea of prevailing upon her to give* FFOLLIOTT *the go-by, and to permit him to return to her. Her absence from home has upset his calculations, and he stands plucking at his lower lip, unable to decide whether to stay or to go, when his attention is attracted by the side-table in front of the window* R. *which is set for a light supper. He moves over to it and notes with evident displeasure that it is laid for two. In addition to sandwiches in a covered entrée-dish and a cake in a silver basket, there are disposed upon it a decanter of whisky, a siphon of soda-water, two tumblers and two plates. A little way removed from these are a silver cigarette-box and a bowl of matches.* RIDGEWELL *emphasizes the fact that the meal is intended for the consumption of two people by lifting the tumblers from the table and replacing them separately with an angry thump. Impelled more by curiosity than by hunger, he lifts the lid from the entrée-*

dish, abstracts a sandwich and sniffs at it. It smells good. He puts it to the proof. It is good. He eats another, and, whilst consuming a third, helps himself to a stiff whisky-and-soda. He swallows this almost at a gulp and feels much better. His demeanour becomes cheerily defiant, a little suggestive of the mouse turned cat-hunter. He walks, a shade unsteadily, to Diana's *writing-table, and picks up one of the portraits of* Folliott *that adorn it. Having gazed upon it, he exclaims disdainfully. It slips from his fingers on to the floor. He stoops to recover it, and is about to replace it upon the table when his temper stiffens and he pitches it contemptuously into the waste-paper basket. The three other portraits follow suit. Before where they have stood is a bowl of violets. Chuckling with delight at the conceit,* Ridgewell *abstracts a bunch from it, and drops it into the basket on top of the portraits, muttering as he does so:* "R.I.P." *Then, with an unsteady foot, he thrusts the basket back into its place beneath the writing-table. As he does this his eye lights upon the almanack with boldly figured numeral that lies upon the table. He picks it up. It proclaims the date to be the seventh of November. Holding it in the one hand (its face towards the audience) he draws his watch from his vest-pocket with the other. The clock upon the mantelshelf chimes midnight.* Ridgewell *agrees the hour by his watch, and nods portentously. He chuckles, pockets his watch, and tears a leaf significantly from the almanack. This shows the date now to be November the eighth. Dangling before the eyes of the audience the leaf that he has detached,* Ridgewell *carries it over to the fireplace and drops it upon the flames. He pauses beside the fireplace, swaying slightly, to consider what shall be his next move. His face lights. He chuckles. He disappears into* Diana's *bedroom, leaving the door ajar. The audience can hear him opening drawers and closing them with a bang. He reappears in a few moments, divested of overcoat, scarf, and hat. Hung upon his arm is a nightdress of pale pink georgette. This he measures against himself. In breadth as well as in length it will afford him ample covering. He chuckles, and is about to put it aside when he is struck by its extreme flimsiness. He eyes it dubiously. A hand that he slips inside it reveals the transparency of the material. He shakes his head and shivers. Here is another problem that requires solution. Again a bright idea occurs to him; he goes back into the bedroom, and, after a brief interval (during which the audience again hears the sound of opening and closing drawers), emerges with a silken vest with insertion of pale blue bébé-ribbon. Satisfied that this will meet his need, he spreads both garments with exaggerated care upon the pouffe that has been placed immediately before the fire, and blows a kiss to each in turn. His eye now wanders to the door of the guest-room. There is a way of escape that must be barred against his intended victim. He strides across the hall, throws the door open boldly, and switches on the light. The room, as he expected, is unoccupied. He closes the door, locks it, and,*

chuckling impishly the while, slips the key into his waistcoat pocket. The next thing to attract his attention is the fire. That must be extinguished. How? Again a bright idea—the siphon of soda-water! He trains this on to the embers and they expire with a hiss of protest. Next to the window. He pulls aside the curtains screening it and throws it wide; the ribald song and laughter of belated revellers is borne into the room upon a current of cold air. Ridgewell *shivers and draws the curtains so that they mask the aperture. Forgetful of the fact that he has "doused" the fire, he holds his hands out to the ashes. Then, recollecting, pulls them away hurriedly and glances quickly over his shoulder as though fearful that his action has been observed and his condition suspected. Assured that he is still alone, he chuckles again impishly, and, nightdress and vest flung over his shoulder, proceeds to the foot of the stairs. There he pauses for a final survey of the room, and so observes the remnants of the supper that he has left upon the side-table. Supplies for the enemy. That will never do. He walks unsteadily towards them, slips the handle of the cake-basket over his arm, takes the decanter of whisky in one hand, the dish of sandwiches in the other, hooks a finger beneath the spout of the siphon, and, thus equipped, staggers up the stairs and along the landing to* Diana's *bedroom, extinguishing the light in the hall by employing the stopper of the decanter to knock up the switch, and with his foot shutting the bedroom door behind him.*

(*The* Curtain *falls for an instant to indicate the passage of four hours.*)

(*It rises again upon a room in darkness. The clock upon the mantelshelf chimes four. The hoot of a departing taxi sounds from the street below. A key turns in the lock of the front door, which opens to admit a man and a woman. The light in the lobby is switched on, then the light in the hall, and* Diana Ridgewell, *followed by* Owen Ffolliott, *comes into the room. Both are in full evening-dress.* Diana *carries a pair of long white gloves which she hangs over the back of a chair. She slips her opera-cloak from her shoulders and hangs it over them.* Ffolliott *removes only his silk hat and his white kid gloves, retaining his overcoat during the major portion of the ensuing scene.* Diana *shivers.*)

Diana (*down stage* c.). B'rff! It's horribly cold in here! . . . Oh, dear! The fire's gone out.

Ffolliott (r. *of* Diana—*with an inclination of his head towards the clock upon the mantelshelf*). Look at the time.

Diana. I know. It's absurd staying up to this hour. . . . Oh, shan't I wish I hadn't in the morning!

Ffolliott. Haven't you enjoyed yourself?

Diana (*uncertainly*). Oh—I suppose so.

Ffolliott. You're not very enthusiastic.

Diana. I'm tired. (*Again she shivers.*)

Ffolliott. Put your cloak on again. You mustn't catch cold.

Diana. It isn't worth while. I'm going to bed in a minute. (*She crosses to the right extremity of the divan.*)

Ffolliott. Does that mean that I'm to be turned out? (*He takes a step* c.)

Diana. If you're very good you can stay to have one whisky-and-soda, and a cigarette.

Ffolliott (*bowing in mock humility*). Milady is very gracious.

Diana. There's a horrible draught coming from somewhere. . . . Surely the window can't be open.

(Ffolliott *crosses to* r. *and investigates.*)

Ffolliott. It is—wide open. (*He closes it, and returning and seating himself in the chair* c. *of table, takes a cigarette from the box in front of him.*)

Diana. How very careless of Heatley! Fancy not noticing it when she drew the curtains! It isn't like her to be so unobservant. I hope she's not in love. That'd be *too* tiresome.

Ffolliott. Well, never mind. Come and sit down here by me. (*He indicates the chair* l. *of table.*)

Diana. No; not to-night, Owen.

Ffolliott. What's the matter, Di? Have I done anything to annoy you?

Diana. No. Why? (*She crosses to the fireplace.*)

Ffolliott. You've been very distant with me all the evening.

Diana. Have I? I'm sorry, Owen. (*She moves* c.) I've been suffering from an attack of conscience.

Ffolliott. What about?

Diana. Bill.

Ffolliott. Your husband?

Diana (*nodding assent, as she comes below the chair* l. *of table*). Mm. . . . D'you realize what day it is?

Ffolliott. No.

Diana. November the eighth.

Ffolliott. Battle o' something?

Diana (*nodding slow and reflective assent*). My domestic battle. The defeat of Bill.

Ffolliott. Time up to-night?

Diana. Last night. (*She waves a hand towards the clock upon the mantelshelf.*) We're in this morning now. The fourteen days in which he had to return finished at midnight of November the seventh.

Ffolliott. Good!

Diana. Is it? . . . Owen, I don't know! I——!

Ffolliott (*with uplifted eyebrows*). Don't know! . . . Good Lord!—you haven't been expecting him to return, have you?

Diana. No, but . . . Oh, I've been an awful beast to him, Owen! I've spent all his money and never given him so much as a thank you. I've——

Ffolliott. My dear girl, what *is* the good of bothering about that now? Your husband left you of his own accord. You asked him to return to you, and he refused.

Diana. He didn't want to refuse, Owen.

Ffolliott. That's as may be. At any rate he *did* refuse.

Diana. Because of his love for me—because I asked him to.

Ffolliott. My dear Di! I should hate to disillusion you, but I'll take long odds that your sainted Bill has a dusky darling tucked away somewhere in a fold of Mesopotamia to whose ebony bosom he——

Diana (*furiously—rising*). There are times, Owen, when you make me want to hit you! (*Moving away to* c.)

Ffolliott (*with languid amusement*). Splendid! Let's have a scrap!—just the very thing to warm us up.

Diana (*turning and looking at him critically*). You're not a bit like Bill.

Ffolliott. That's why you find me so attractive.

Diana (*with a sigh*). I wish you weren't so horribly self-satisfied. (*Coming down to the foot of the divan.*)

Ffolliott (*flippantly*). "We needs must love the highest when we see it."

(Diana *turns from him with an exclamation if impatience.* Ffolliott *rallies her.*)

Di!

Diana (*coldly*). Yes?

Ffolliott. D'you know that you're looking extraordinarily attractive?

Diana (*indifferently*). Am I? . . . Have you finished your cigarette?

Ffolliott (*piqued, but still nonchalant*). Nearly.

Diana. Then I think I'll go to bed. (*She waves a hand in the direction of her cloak, indicating that she desires to be helped into it, and turns her back to him accordingly.*)

Ffolliott. Right ho! (*Rising and taking up her cloak.*) It's time I was making tracks. (*Slipping the cloak over her shoulders, and putting his arms about her as he does so.*) Good night, old thing. Sleep well.

(*Before* Diana *is aware of his intention he has drawn her to him in a close embrace. She averts her face, and presses her hands against his chest in the endeavour to escape his kisses.*)

Diana. Owen! Owen! Please!

Ffolliott (*blankly—releasing her*). What's the matter?

Diana. You know our bargain!

Ffolliott. My dear old girl, that refrigerator attitude was all very well so long as you had a husband in the offing, but now that he's offed for good——

Diana. It mustn't make any difference. (*Turning aside from him.*)

Ffolliott (*swinging her about, so that they come face to face again*). What *do* you mean?

Diana (*desperately*). I don't want you to be under any misapprehension, Owen. I mean I—I'm not that sort of woman.

(*With an exclamation of impatience* Ffolliott *crushes her to him.* Diana *struggles in his arms, and eventually thrusts him from her with such violence that he staggers back against the writing-table.*)

That side of life doesn't appeal to me. I——

Ffolliott (*honestly mystified*). But surely you don't mean that, after we're married, we——

Diana (*appealingly*). Oh, don't let's talk about it now. It's much too late, and (*smiling wistfully*) I'm dreadfully tired, Owen. (*Crossing away to the fireplace.*)

Ffolliott (*yielding to her mood*). Sorry, old thing. Of course you are. My fault. . . . I'll just help myself to a whisky-and-soda, if I may, and then vamoose. (*Going across to the side-table* r. *in search of the decanter.*) Where is it?

Diana. The whisky? Isn't it on the table there?

Ffolliott. There's nothing here but a couple of tumblers.

Diana. No sandwiches, or cake, or anything?

Ffolliott. No. (*Moving to above the table.*)

Diana (*joining him at* r.c.). What *can* have happened to Heatley? She had my instructions. It's too extraordinary.

Ffolliott. Well, never mind, old girl. It really doesn't matter. (*Again he approaches amorously.*)

Diana (*hastily*). But it *does* matter! (*Primarily in order to evade a repetition of his advances, she passes hurriedly in front of him and makes examination of the side-table.*)

(Ffolliott *drops down* c.)

(*The tumbler that* Ridgewell *has used attracts* Diana's *attention. She picks it up, exclaims, and raises it to her nostrils.*)

This glass has been used!—and . . . Smell it!

Ffolliott. Whisky?

Diana. You're the best judge of that! (*She gives the glass to* Ffolliott, *who, having sniffed at the dregs contained in it, nods confirmation.*)

Ffolliott. Mh'm!

(*A sudden alarming thought enters* Diana's *mind. Involuntarily she retreats a pace from the table, the tips of her fingers pressed to her lower lip.*)

Diana. Owen! (*She moves to the window.*)

Ffolliott. Yes?

Diana. The open window!

Ffolliott. What about it?

Diana. Burglars! (*She goes* c. *above the table.*)

Ffolliott. By Jove! Yes! (*He crosses to the window.*) It does look a bit like it. (*He places the tumbler on the side-table.*)

Diana (*with excitement*). The sandwiches would be in a silver dish!—the cake in a silver basket!

Ffolliott. But what about this cigarette-box? (*He points to it as he moves above the table.*) That's silver.

Diana. They must have overlooked it. . . . What had we better do?—call up the night-porter?—or ring up the police?

Ffolliott. I shouldn't do either until we've made quite sure. (*He makes a hurried examination of the room, and walking to the side-table draws* Diana's *attention to the silver candlesticks upon it.*) If there have been burglars here they've overlooked a lot of things besides the cigarette-box.

Diana. I wonder if they've been into my room. I left all sorts of things scattered about there—brooches, and rings, and goodness knows what!

Ffolliott. Shall I go and see?

Diana. No. You wouldn't know what to look for. I'll go.

(*She runs up the stairs and enters her room boldly. An instant's pause and then a shriek of fear that brings* Ffolliott *in hot haste to the foot of the staircase.* Diana *emerges from her bedroom more rapidly than she went into it.*)

(*Breathlessly.*) There's somebody in my bed!

Ffolliott. Nonsense!

Diana. There is really! (*She descends to the first landing.*)

Ffolliott. Man?

Diana. I don't know. (*She comes to the foot of the stairs, and stands* l. *of them.*)

Ffolliott. Good Lord! Must have drunk himself stupid and . . . (*He flings off his overcoat, drops it over the banisters* r., *thrusts* Diana *aside, and makes for the bedroom door.*) I'll soon settle him!

Diana (*fearfully—checking him as he reaches the first landing*). Be careful, Owen! He might be violent.

Ffolliott. After a decanter full of whisky? Not he! (*He disappears into the bedroom, exclaiming violently:*) Now then, you——! (*He breaks off abruptly and concludes in a tone much more sibilant and intense.*) *You—blighter!*

(*The inflection of his voice must convey to the audience the amazement and the wrathful indignation that besets him at sight of* Ridgewell *sitting up in bed and blinking at him sleepily.*)

Diana (*calling anxiously from the foot of the staircase, taking cover behind his overcoat*). D'you want any help?

(*No answer is returned.* Ffolliott *appears in the doorway, flushed and furious.*)

Ffolliott. Well, I'll be damned! (*He rushes down the stairs, and marches over to the fireplace.*)

Diana (*thoroughly alarmed*). Owen! Tell me! What d'you mean? Who is it? (*She moves down stage a little.*)

(Ridgewell *appears, barefooted, in the doorway, a negligée, snatched up in haste, covering the nightdress that he "looted" in the previous scene. His hair is ruffled, his cheeks flushed from sleep. He rubs his knuckles in his eyes and yawns prodigiously.*)

Ffolliott (*directing* Diana's *attention to him with a dramatic gesture*). Behold!

Diana (*gasping*). Bill!

Ridgewell (*stifling a yawn—a little thick of speech*). Well, this is a nice hour to come and wake me out of my beauty sleep. I waited up for you as long as I could, and then——

(*The conclusion of his sentence is lost in the depths of a cavernous yawn.*)

Diana (*moving to the foot of the stairs*). Bill, what are you doing here?—and what *have* you got on?

Ridgewell. The only things that I could find to sleep in. This nightdress is a bally nuisance. Will insist on turning itself into a muffler. Most immodest. Pyjamas are much more comfortable. Why don't you wear pyjamas, Di?

Diana (*shaking with laughter*). If you only *knew* what you look like!

Ffolliott (*grimly*). I'm glad you find the situation amusing.

Diana. Well, did you ever see anybody look so ridiculous?

Ffolliott. He doesn't look half so ridiculous as you will when the story gets about.

Diana (*her laughter checked*). What story?

Ffolliott. Why, that, after all the fussation in the courts, the reports in the papers, and all the rest of it, he's come back to you.

Diana (*startled*). But it's—it's only a joke. (*Appealing to her husband.*) You're having a joke with us. That's all—isn't it, Bill?

Ridgewell. Tha's the idea. And a jolly good joke, too!

Ffolliott. Joke!—at this hour in the morning!

Ridgewell (*chanting triumphantly*).

"For I've come home in the morning,
Yes, I've come home in the mor-or-ning!"

Diana (*much disturbed—moving a shade nearer to him*). Sh! Bill! Sh!—for goodness' sake! You'll wake Heatley.

Ridgewell. Heatley? . . . Ah! That's your handmaiden. Mustn't disturb her from her virgin slumbers. That'd never do.

Ffolliott (*to* Diana, *through clenched teeth*). Still enjoying the joke ?

(Diana *realizes that* Ridgewell *has looked upon the wine when it was red, and that the situation is distinctly awkward. She proceeds to cajole him.*)

Diana. Bill !

Ridgewell (*sleepily*). Hullo ?

Diana. Your joke's been a great success—

(Ffolliott *growls.*)

(*She repeats with emphasis*)—a *great* success !—but don't go and spoil it by carrying it too far. . . . You've given us an awful fright as it is. We thought that there'd been burglars in the flat.

Ridgewell. That's good. Why did you think that there'd been burglars ?—Oh, because the sandwiches and things had disappeared. I brought them in here. I thought you'd rather have them after you'd got into bed. . . . Now wasn't that thoughtful of me ?

(Ffolliott's *wrath is nearing boiling-point. He emits a hiss as of escaping steam.* Diana *signals to him to contain himself yet a while longer, and addresses* Ridgewell *in the tone that she would use were she trying to call to order a refractory child.*)

Diana. Now, Bill dear, remember what I said. Don't carry the joke too far. . . . Be a good boy ! Go and put on your things and then get back to your hotel.

Ridgewell (*blankly*). Back to my hotel ? . . . Di ! D'you mean to say that you don't realize that I've finished with the hotel for ever ?

Diana. Don't talk nonsense, Bill. (*Dropping down stage a little.*)

Ridgewell. It's a fact—a solemn fact. . . . Your prayers have been answered, Di. I've come back to you.

(Ffolliott *makes an angry movement forward.*)

Diana. Oh, now you're being silly.

Ridgewell. " Come back to me, Bill ! "—those were the very words you used in your letter. " Come back to me ! " I've turned them over and over in my mind. I've thought of what you said, and what the judge said, and what the s'-s'-s'licitor said, and (*fatuously*) I've come !

(Ffolliott *explodes at last.*)

Ffolliott. Now, look here, Ridgewell——! (*He goes to the foot of the stairs and faces* Ridgewell.)

Ridgewell (*blinking upon him owlishly*). Hullo, Mister Secretary ! Where's your typewriter ?

Ffolliott. O-oh! (*He moves* R. *of* Diana, *who lays a hand upon his wrist and draws him aside.*)

Diana (*sotto voce*). Don't get excited, Owen. Leave me to deal with him. I can see what's the matter. He's—er—— (*Mimicking the action of raising a glass to her lips.*)

Ffolliott (*loudly, careless whether* Ridgewell *hears him or does not*). Drunk! Yes! That's obvious.

Ridgewell. When I was your age, Di, I was taught that it was rude to whisper in company. And if your gen'leman friend's suggestin' that I'm drunk, let me tell him that I'm nothing of the sort. As you put it so charmingly to him the other day, I may have got a vine-leaf, or rather an ear or two of barley in my hair, but drunk I most emphatically am not. I'm (*yawns*) just com-for'able. (*Propping himself sleepily against the banisters.*)

Diana (*most diplomatically from the foot of the stairs*). Bill dear, it's very sweet of you to want to make this sacrifice for me. But we mustn't do anything in a hurry. Now, this is what I suggest (*she gives* Ffolliott *a glance indicative of her certainty of success*): you go back to your hotel, and sleep on it——

Ridgewell. Sleep on the hotel! D'you mean the roof?

Diana. No, no!—sleep on what you've been saying, and then come back and talk it over with me in the morning.

Ridgewell. Couldn't be done, my dear. To-morrow'll be fifteen days. Now the judge said fourteen—most emphatically fourteen. Didn't even give me the option of a fine. (*Laughing inanely.*)

Diana. But, Bill, it's quite sufficient that you've been here. There's no necessity for you to stay all night.

Ridgewell. Oh, pardon me, my dear. That's where you're wrong. You look up restitution in the dictionary.

Diana. But, listen, Bill——!

Ridgewell (*loudly*). Now it's not a bit of good you arguing, Diana.

(Diana *makes a gesture urging him not to make such a noise, and hastening to the service door up* L., *places her ear to it.*)

I've quite made up my mind. "J'y suis, j'y reste!" (*His voice trails away sleepily. He yawns. His head nods. His eyes close; propped up against the banisters he drops off to sleep.*)

Ffolliott. You see, it's perfectly hopeless.

Diana. S'sh! . . . Bill!

Ridgewell (*opening one eye*). Hullo? . . . Oh, I say! I couldn't find a pair of your slippers to fit me, Diana, and my feet are gettin' frozen. Now the one thing a soldier mus' never have 's col' feet!

(Diana *gives up the unequal struggle, and seats herself, with a gesture of hopelessness, in the chair* L. *of table.*)

Diana. You'd better go back to bed and get them warm.

Ridgewell. Right-o! I will. But you won't be long, will you? The hot-water bottle's getting cold. . . . Tootle-oo, Mr. Secretary. Much obliged to you for bringing my wife home. (*Turning back into the bedroom, muttering as he goes:*) Rest—that's what I want to do—rest. (*He closes the door.*)

Ffolliott (*glaring after him and exclaiming viciously*). Drunken swine!

Diana. Don't talk about him like that, Owen. (*Rising.*) I don't like it.

Ffolliott. Wifie's little pet, then!—prefer that?

Diana. There's no need to be nasty. (*Moving up* c., *her eyes upon the bedroom door.*)

Ffolliott (*sitting on the table*). My dear Di, your attitude is utterly incomprehensible. . . . Here's this—well, this—oh! this *fellow* come and upset all our plans at the last moment in a drunken freak; and you treat the affair first of all as a joke, and then as if —well, I'm damned if I know what to make of it!

Diana. You don't understand, Owen.

Ffolliott. I don't!

Diana. Poor old Bill! It makes me feel sad to see him like that.

Ffolliott. Sad. If you said mad I could appreciate it.

Diana. Can't you see what's happened, Owen? (*Coming down a little to* c., *and turning to him.*)

Ffolliott. I wish I could see what's going to happen.

Diana. I've broken his heart. (*Again she looks towards the bedroom door.*)

Ffolliott. Oh! Is *that* the event he's been celebrating.

Diana. He's been trying to drown thought.

Ffolliott. I wish to the devil he'd drowned himself at the same time.

Diana. Owen! Please! I *have* asked you. Don't talk about him like that. (*Sitting on the divan.*)

Ffolliott. My dear Di! (*Moving over to her.*) What *is* the matter with you? Can't you understand that if he's allowed to remain here until somebody sees him your action will go for nothing and you'll become the laughing-stock of everyone who knows you?

Diana. We shall have to get him away, of course.

Ffolliott. How?—if he refuses to go? We can't use force.

Diana. No, no, we mustn't do anything that'd wake Heatley. We shall have to wait until he's slept this off. He'll be a different being then. He'll be so dreadfully ashamed of himself that he'll do anything I ask without a murmur.

Ffolliott. My dear girl, I'm beginning to doubt your powers of twisting him round your little finger. You boasted of them before, and look what's happened.

Diana. His love for me has proved stronger than his resolution.

Ffolliott. A moment ago you said that his love for you had proved stronger than his desire, that it was his love for you that had made him consent to—well—to go out of your life.

Diana. So it was.

Ffolliott. Hang it! You can't have it both ways—unless the gear of his love has slipped and got into reverse.

Diana. Well, don't let's argue about it, Owen. You'll never be able to put yourself in his place.

Ffolliott. So I'm beginning to suspect.

Diana (*turning to him*). You know what I mean.

Ffolliott. Hum!

Diana. Well, have you got anything better to propose?

Ffolliott. Than what? (*Sitting on the divan* R. *of* Diana.)

Diana. Than what I suggested.

Ffolliott. Wait until he's sober—d'you mean?—and then——

Diana. Yes.

Ffolliott. But that means that you'll have to remain here.

Diana. I could hardly go anywhere else at this hour in the morning, could I?

Ffolliott. But where are you going to sleep?

Diana. I shan't dare to sleep. I shall just lie down in the guest-room. (*Indicating the door up* R.)

(Ffolliott *is about to protest.*)

(*Checking him.*) I shall be perfectly all right. The bed's made. I shall be quite comfortable.

Ffolliott (*affording a grudging consent*). In that case I suppose I'd better have a shake-down here. (*He eyes the couch distastefully.*)

Diana. My dear boy! Do you want to strip the last rag of my reputation from me?

Ffolliott. What d'you mean?

Diana. The night-porter saw you come up. If he doesn't see you go down again——! (*A gesture serves for completion of the sentence.*)

Ffolliott. Damn the night-porter!

Diana. Besides, it would never do for Bill to find you still here when he wakes up. That *would* be the last straw!

Ffolliott (*bending towards her*). But to leave you alone with a drunken man——!

Diana (*mischievously*). Will you never indulge after we're married?

Ffolliott (*angrily—ignoring the thrust*). How the devil did he get in here?—unless, of course, Heatley admitted him, in which case the fat's already in the fire.

Diana. He has a key.

Ffolliott. A latchkey?

Diana. Mm. The one he took from you—don't you remember?

Ffolliott. Let himself in with *my* key? Well, I'll be damned! (*His indignation in the circumstances strikes* Diana *as supremely comical; she is compelled to laugh.*) It isn't anything to laugh about. I wish to God you'd take things seriously, Di.

Diana. Oh, don't be angry with me, Owen! I'm *so* tired! (*Rising and moving to the fireplace, leaving her cloak upon the divan.*)

Ffolliott. It's all very well, Di, but—dash it!—I *should* have expected you to——

(*He hesitates. She prompts him.*)

Diana. To what?

Ffolliott. Well, to show a little more resentment at such outrageous conduct. . . . A fortnight ago you were all smiles because you thought you'd got rid of your husband. Now——

(*Again he hesitates. Again she prompts him.*)

Diana. Yes?

Ffolliott. Now you seem to be all smiles because you haven't.

Diana. I see. You think the gear of my love has slipped and got into reverse as well as his.

Ffolliott (*rising, and going to her*). I'm blessed if I know what to think. Your manner towards me all the evening has been damned off-hand. You've admitted that that was because your thoughts were—well—elsewhere. And, on top of that, when I tried to kiss you just now you shrank from me as though I were the plague. . . . I'm beginning to wonder, Di.

Diana. It's women's province in life to keep men wondering, Owen.

Ffolliott. That's all very well up to a point, but—— (*The clock on the mantelshelf chimes the half-hour.*) Oh—damn it!—half-past four. If you're to get any sleep at all, I must be off. . . . I don't like leaving you a bit, Di.

Diana. Neither did Bill. (*She gurgles.*) That's why he's come back.

(Ffolliott *exclaims in exasperation, and, taking his coat from the banisters, gets into it.*)

(*Inquiring of him seductively.*) Are *you* coming back, Owen?

Ffolliott. Of course I am, just as soon as ever I've had a bath and change.

Diana. Oh, not so soon as that! Give me until eleven. I shall try and get some sleep after Bill's gone.

Ffolliott (*gloomily*). If he *does* go.

Diana. Oh, he'll go all right.

Ffolliott. Optimist! (*Coming down* c., *fishing in his pocket for his cigarette-case, and looking intently at* Diana. *A pause. Preparing to light his cigarette.*) Well, au revoir, Di.

Diana (*moving* r. *below the table*). Au revoir, Owen.

Ffolliott (*hesitatingly*). I suppose——

Diana. Yes?

Ffolliott. Oh, nothing!—only—damn it!—I wish you were made of flesh and blood instead of marble.

(Diana *smiles upon him sphinx-like.*

Ffolliott *snatches his silk hat from the rack, and exits by front door.*

Diana *retains her pose until she hears the catch of the front door click to behind* Ffolliott, *then she sighs deeply and presses her fingers to her temples as though the pulses throbbed in them painfully. Suddenly remindful of the cold, she shivers, and moving over to the divan upon which she flung her cloak, she takes it up and walks slowly across to the door of the guest-room. She turns the handle. The door remains closed against her. Concluding that the catch has stuck, she turns the handle rapidly several times. Still it does not open, nor does it yield even to a violent shaking of the handle. It is borne in upon her that the door is locked, that the key has been removed, and that the person responsible for both circumstances is her husband. To have played such a trick upon her is unpardonable. She exclaims in anger and presses her teeth upon her lower lip, then, with quick decision, goes to the door of her bedroom, opens it, and calls:*)

Diana. Bill!

(*There is no response.*)

(*She calls again commandingly.*) Bill!

(*A sleepy voice answers from within the bedroom.*)

Ridgewell. Put it down outside.

Diana. Have you got the key of the guest-room?

Ridgewell. Eh?

Diana (*impatiently*). The key of the guest-room!

Ridgewell. Oh, lor'! You're always botherin' me for keys. Wha' d'you want it for?

Diana. Will you give it to me, please?

Ridgewell. Half a minute, an' I'll come an' talk to you.

(*Follow sounds of him heaving out of bed, the chink of glass against glass, and the squirting of soda-water from a siphon.*)

(Diana *clenches her fists and exclaims in impatient anger.*)

(*Appearing at the door of the bedroom attired as before.*) Oh! So the secretary-bird's hopped off to roost at last. Good! . . . Now then. old lady, what can I do for you?

Diana (*imperatively—pointing to the door of the guest-room,*) Unlock that door, please!

Ridgewell. Wha's the idea?

Diana. I want to hang my gown up in the wardrobe.

Ridgewell. But you've a wardrobe in here. (*Indicating her own room.*)

Diana. That's full.

Ridgewell. Well, then hang it over a chair jus' for to-night. It won't take any harm. . . . Tell you the honest truth, I don' remember where I put the key.

Diana. You refuse to find it ? !

Ridgewell. There's no hurry. I'm sure to come across it in the morning.

Diana. You mean to compel me to pass the remainder of the night in here ?

Ridgewell. Compel you to—what ? My dear Di ! Haven't I been waitin' for you to come to bed for goo'ness knows how long ? . . . "A wife's place is by her husband's side." That's what you said in your letter. And you're perfectly right. It is—(*drawing the nightdress more closely about him*) 'specially on a cold night like this.

Diana. Oh ! If you were only yourself—— !

Ridgewell. But I am only myself. You surely don't imagine —— ! . . . Or—I say !—are you seein' double, too ?

Diana (*at the foot of the stairs*). Now understand me once and for all, Bill. I refuse absolutely to come into that room so long as you're in it. . . . I'd sooner die ! (*Crossing down to the chair* l. *of the table.*)

Ridgewell. Oh, not in that dress ! No, I wouldn't be found dead in that dress, if I were you. Think of the verdict they'd bring in—death from exposure ! . . . Oh ! (*Covering his face with his hands.*)

(Diana *inhales sharply through clenched teeth and sits* l. *of table.*)

(*Stumbling down the stairs, and standing, swaying, beside the writing-table.*) Now did you or did you not write me a letter imploring me to return to you ?

Diana. You know perfectly well I didn't !

Ridgewell. Wha-at ? !

Diana. You know perfectly well that that letter was dictated by my solicitor—that it was merely a matter of form. . . . And, in any case, you answered that nothing in the world would induce you to return.

Ridgewell. My dear girl, you know perfectly well that *that* letter was dictated by your solicitor. . . . Now let's get down to brass tacks. Didn't you mean a single word that you wrote—or, rather, that he wrote—in that letter ?

Diana. You know I didn't !

Ridgewell. Well, that's all right, then ; 'cos I didn't mean a single word that I wrote—or, rather, that he wrote—in reply.

Diana. O-oh !

Ridgewell. Now come on, Di, old woman, let's cry quits! You don't love that "Ha! Ha!" secretary-bird of yours a bit—you know you don't. And I do love you, so——

Diana (*rising furiously*). *Will* you listen to *me*?! And please understand that I mean every word I say. After the way that you've behaved to-night, nothing would persuade me to come back to you!—nothing!—not if you were the last man in the world!

Ridgewell. My dear Di, if I were the last man in the world, believe me, I should be far too busy to be botherin' about you.

Diana. O-oh! (*Dropping down stage to below the table.*) Go back to your bed!

Ridgewell. *Our* bed, my dear!—*our* bed!—possessive plural. . . . Coming?

(Diana *disdains reply.*)

Well, I shan't press you. (*Proceeding to the staircase.*) If you dislike me so intensely that you prefer to woo death on the sofa, there's nothing further to be said. (*Mounting the first flight of stairs. Then pausing and turning.*) But, in case you find his embrace a trifle chilly, I'll leave the way open for you to change your mind. Tha's woman's prerogative—and I'm a great upholder of woman's pr'ogatives. (*Stumbling over the word and chuckling.*) Ha! Ha! Sounds as though I were a new sort of suspender—doesn't it? (*Mounting the second flight of stairs and holding the bedroom door half open.*) There you are! . . . The open door! That's symbolical of my attitude towards you. And very nicely put—although I say it as shouldn't. (*Disappearing into bedroom. Then—by way of bidding her "good-night,"—popping his head around the door, and exclaiming:*) Tootle-oo!

(Diana *gasps in impotent fury. Eyes flashing, bosom heaving, she marches majestically up the stairs and slams to the door of her bedroom.* Ridgewell's *response is to bid her cheerily:*)

(*Off stage*). Come in!

(*Again a gasp of fury from* Diana. *She descends the stairs, picks up her cloak, and, forgetful momentarily that the door of the guest-room is locked against her, makes a second vain attempt to open it. Annoyance with herself for her lapse of memory adds fuel to the fire of her wrath against her husband. She stamps her foot viciously upon the floor and exclaims in exasperation and augmented fury. Then she returns to the centre of the room and considers desperately her situation. The cold strikes to her bones. She shivers, and her teeth begin to chatter. She puts on her cloak and pulls it tightly about her. Still she shivers. She collects all the cushions that are in the room and piles them upon the couch. From its place before the fire she pulls by the tail the tiger-skin rug. This she places with the pouffe ready to her hand beside the couch. Having extinguished all*

the lights in the room, with the exception of that upon the table behind the couch, she prepares for "bed." Swathed in her cloak she places herself in a semi-recumbent position upon the couch and proceeds to cover herself with cushions as did robins "The Babes in the Wood" with leaves. With a sigh of relief she relaxes her limbs and lets her head fall back. It descends with a bump upon the wooden arm of the couch. This causes her to start up again with an exclamation of pain and necessitates a redisposition of the cushions. Such having been effected to her satisfaction, she pulls up the tiger-skin rug, "tucks it in" over the cushions, and crowns the unstable superstructure with the pouffe. She is about to settle down finally when she finds herself looking into the hideously grinning mask of the tiger, fangs bared as though about to devour her. She cries out in terror and makes an involuntary, convulsive movement that heaves pouffe, rug, and cushions to the floor. The thread of her control, already worn thin, snaps finally. She vents her feelings upon the tumbled cushions, dealing them vicious kicks that send one flying below the writing-table in the direction of the window and another to the top of the first flight of stairs. Then she collapses miserably into the chair beside and to the left of the writing-table. Almost involuntarily she is drawn to look longingly towards the door behind which there are warmth and comfort for the taking. Resolutely she turns her back upon it. Her eye lights on the cushion that she has kicked towards the window. She rises, picks it up and tosses it on to the couch. From there she proceeds to retrieve the cushion on the stairs. Her proximity to the door of her bedroom causes her resolution to waver. She flings the cushion from her angrily. Again she turns her back upon the door. Again her eye is drawn irresistibly towards it. Slowly but surely her physical need conquers her determination. With dragging steps she mounts the second flight of stairs, tiptoes to the door of the bedroom, and inclines her ear to it. Her fingers grasp the handle. Slowly—very slowly—she turns it and opens the door. The light from the bedroom shines full upon her as she stands, perfectly still, listening. Silence complete and absolute, and then—a snore. With a gesture of self-contemptuous surrender, she enters and switches out the light, closing the door softly behind her.

The Curtain *falls.*

ACT III

The Scene *is the same as that of the previous two Acts. The hearth has been cleared, and the fire lighted.*

(Heatley *is dusting the room. She crosses to the open window, through which the sun shines warmly, and shakes her duster vigorously over the courtyard below. Then she resumes her task and proceeds to dust and tidy the writing-table. Having put it in order, she stoops to pick up the waste-paper basket, and is about to remove it when its unusual weight causes her to pause and to examine its contents. An exclamation of astonishment marks her recognition of them. Her first instinct is to rescue the portraits of* Ffolliott *from the place of degradation to which* Ridgewell *has consigned them, and to restore them to the position of honour upon* Diana's *writing-table. With this intention she takes one from the basket. Then it occurs to her as possible that it may be her mistress who is responsible for their situation. With a curious expression upon her face she glances at the door of* Diana's *bedroom, and then, clicking her tongue against the roof of her mouth, she drops the portrait back into the waste-paper basket and restores the basket to its place beneath the writing-table. Pondering the situation that she assumes to have arisen, she moves slowly across to the table upon which she had laid supper before going to bed the previous evening, and, observing the disappearance of decanter, entrée-dish, and cake-basket, exclaims again in astonishment. Here is a circumstance that is altogether beyond her comprehension. She is endeavouring to connect it in some way with her discovery of* Ffolliott's *portraits in the waste-paper basket when the clock upon the mantelpiece, chiming eleven, recalls her to a sense of her duties. She closes the window, gathers up her duster and carpet-sweeper, and goes out, by the service door up* L.)

An instant later, and Diana *pops her head cautiously around the door of her bedroom. Satisfied that nobody is about, she emerges attired in the negligée that her husband borrowed in the previous Act, and carrying the entrée-dish, cake-basket, and decanter, the absence of which has so perplexed* Heatley. *These she deposits upon the supper-table, and, having done so, beats a hasty retreat back to her room out of which she comes again almost immediately as* Heatley *approaches with a tray containing her "early morning tea."*

Diana. Good morning, Heatley.

Heatley (*in tone of surprise*). G-good morning, madam.

Diana. You're surprised to see me up.

Heatley. I am indeed, madam. . . . You—you did say that you were not to be called before eleven, didn't you ?

Diana (*crossing to the fireplace*). Yes, Heatley, but unfortunately I came back from the dance with a bad headache that made it impossible for me to sleep, so I thought I might just as well get up.

Heatley (*sympathetically, as she places the tray upon the writing-table and arranges its contents*). I quite understand, madam. . . . If I might be permitted, I should like to say how sorry I am.

Diana (*facing to the fireplace, slightly puzzled*). Er—thank you, Heatley.

Heatley. I mean for the upset that's caused your headache, madam.

Diana (*turning to* Heatley, *startled—and wondering how much she knows*). Upset ? What d'you mean, Heatley ?

Heatley. Well, putting two and two together, madam——

Diana. Eh ?

Heatley. Your headache and—er—your waste-paper basket, madam——

Diana (*staring in blank amazement*). Are you *quite* mad, Heatley ? What on earth has my waste-paper basket got to do with it ?

Heatley. The portraits of Mr. Ffolliott that used to be on your desk, madam——

Diana. Well ? What about them ?

Heatley. I found them in the waste-paper basket when I was about to empty it just now.

Diana (*incredulously*). Found them—where ?

(Heatley *picks up the basket for her inspection.*)

Heatley. They're still in it, madam.

Diana (*crossing to* l. *of writing-table, peering into the basket*). Well, I——! (*Extracting one of the photographs.*)

Heatley (*semi-questioning*). You didn't put them there, madam ?

Diana. But of course I didn't ! It—(*her voice falters a little as she realizes who did. She gives a glance in the direction of the bedroom door*) it's too extraordinary ! (*A step away to* c.)

Heatley (*suppressing a smile of disbelief*). It is indeed, madam. (*Moving above the table* c.) I'm sure I'm very sorry if I've said anything that——

Diana (*moving again to the* l. *of the writing-table, and rearranging the portraits upon it*). That's all right, Heatley—quite all right. (*Making haste to create a diversion by pressing her fingers to her temples and exclaiming :*) Oh !—my poor head ! (*Sinking into the chair* l. *of the table.*)

Heatley. If I might suggest it, madam, I should go and lie down again for a bit, and let me bring you in this cup of tea. Perhaps when you've had that——

Diana (*hastily*). No, thank you, Heatley; no. I'll have the tea in here. (*Motioning to* Heatley *to place the tray beside her.*)

Heatley. Very good, madam. (*Moving towards the window, her eye lights upon the decanter, cake-basket, and entrée-dish now duly in their place upon the side-table. For the third time she exclaims in astonishment:*) Well, I'm blessed!

Diana (*indifferently*). What's the matter?

Heatley. The decanter—and the other things! They weren't here a minute ago!

Diana. Oh, nonsense, Heatley! They must have been.

Heatley. They weren't indeed, madam! I looked for them. And—er—(*fixing her eye upon the decanter and taking it into her hand*) excuse me, madam, but did a number of people accompany you back after the dance?

Diana (*endeavouring to speak lightly*). No, no—only Mr. Ffolliott. He was good enough to see me home.

Heatley (*with decision*). Then that settles it! (*Putting down the decanter, and picking up the smelling-salts, and carrying them over to* Diana.) There's a man got into the flat! (*Thrusting the salts into* Diana's *hand.*) He's hiding somewhere.

Diana (*with a nervous laugh, designed to conceal her extreme uneasiness*). Rubbish, Heatley, rubbish! What ever makes you think that?

Heatley (*returning to the side-table and again holding up the decanter*). Look for yourself, madam! There's hardly a teaspoonful left in it. And I filled it right up to the top last thing before I went to bed. I opened a new bottle.

Diana (*sniffing the salts*). Oh, yes, yes, of course. I remember now. I had an accident. I upset it.

Heatley (*looking at her curiously*). In here, madam?

Diana. Yes.

Heatley. Well, it's dried up very quickly. There's not a mark on the floor anywhere.

Diana. The carpet must have absorbed it. Whisky's very easily absorbed.

Heatley (*dryly, her eye upon the decanter*). So I believe, madam.

Diana. And now, Heatley, that we've disposed of that mystery, I want you to run across to Boot's and get me some aspirin powders.

(Heatley *replaces the decanter on the side-table.*)

Heatley. I have some tablets in my bedroom, madam. (*Crossing behind* Diana c. *towards the service door up* l.)

Diana (*making haste to check her*). No, no, I want the powders. They act more quickly. And if Boot's don't stock them, inquire at every chemist's you come to until you find one that does.

(Heatley *moves slowly to the service door up* l. *without reply. There she turns and answers acidly:*)

Heatley. Very good, madam. (*She goes out to dress for the street.*)

(Diana *remains seated for a moment, facing the audience, in attitude of extreme dejection, then turns with the intention of pouring herself out a cup of tea. She is in the very act of lifting the tea-pot from the tray when a crash of glass from the direction of her bedroom causes her to put it down again and to make haste to the foot of the stairs. She listens for a moment to assure herself that* Heatley *is not on her way back. Then darts up the stairs, throws open the door of the bedroom, and demands in a hushed voice:*)

Diana. Bill! Are you determined to ruin me? I begged of you not to make a sound, and——

Ridgewell (*from within the bedroom*). I'm awfully sorry, Di, but I'm afraid I've broken your tooth-glass. I——

Diana. 'Sh!—for goodness' sake! (*Glancing fearfully over the banister.*) Sit down in that chair at the foot of the bed!—and don't stir from it until I tell you that you may!

Ridgewell. But——!

Diana. 'Sh!

(*She closes the door, and, turning to face the audience, presses her knuckles in distracted manner to her brow. Then she tiptoes down the stairs again, running into* Heatley *at the foot of them.*)

Heatley. Is there anything beside the powders that I can get you whilst I'm out, madam?

Diana (*snatching at the excuse to keep her out of the way five minutes longer*). Er—yes—you might call in at the post office and get me ten shillings' worth of stamps. (*Moving away a step towards* c.)

Heatley (*at the foot of the stairs,* l. *of* Diana). Shall I find your purse on your dressing-table, madam! (*Quickly moving towards the stairs to the bedroom.*)

Diana (*hastily—barring her way*). No! No! Now I come to think of it, I haven't got any money. I'll have to cash a cheque later in the day. It doesn't matter about the stamps, Heatley. They can wait.

Heatley. Very good, madam. (*Crossing* Diana *to go to the front door.*)

Diana. And—er—Heatley!

Heatley (*pausing near arch up* r.c.). Yes, madam?

Diana. There's no need for you to hurry.

Heatley. But surely, madam, your head——!

Diana. Yes, yes. It's making me talk foolishly. I mean you'll be sure not to come back without the powders, won't you?

Heatley. Well—naturally, madam.

Diana. Naturally, Heatley. . . . Thank you. (*She turns aside to avoid the curious glance that* Heatley *bestows upon her before she goes out by the front door. A moment's pause in which to make sure*

that Heatley *has really gone, and then* Diana *darts again up the stairs, leading to her bedroom, throws open the door and calls :*) Now then !—quickly !

(Ridgewell *comes out in evening-dress—the picture of misery.*)

Ridgewell (*crossing in front of* Diana *to her right*). I don't know what I look like, but if I look like what I feel like, then—oh, lor' ! (*He groans and presses the palm of his right hand to his aching brow.*)

Diana (*cold and business-like*). I've got Heatley out of the way. If you go at once and turn to the left when you get out of the front door there'll be no fear of you running into her. She's gone to the right.

Ridgewell (*startled*). But, my dear Di, you can't seriously mean that you expect me to walk out into the streets of London at eleven o'clock in the morning—like this !

Diana. There's no need to walk. There'll be plenty of taxis about.

Ridgewell. But—— !

Diana. Where have you left your hat and coat ?

Ridgewell. They're in the bedroom. . . . But, I say—— !

Diana. There's no time to argue ! (*She disappears into the bedroom.*)

(Ridgewell *looks after her helplessly, then, comes down to the top of the writing-table and finds himself confronted by a mirror. The appearance that he presents causes him to groan in agony of spirit. He moves away,* r. *of the table, and stands rasping his chin between thumb and forefinger when* Diana *returns, bringing his hat and coat.*)

Ridgewell. You don't happen to have such a thing as a razor about the place, do you ?

Diana (c.). I should have thought the question was superfluous. You're still alive.

Ridgewell (*feeling none too bright*). Eh ? (*Her meaning dawns upon him.*) Well, upon my word !—of all the—— !

Diana. I'm waiting to help you on with your coat.

Ridgewell. I'm much obliged to you, but——

Diana. I'm getting tired of holding it.

Ridgewell. Now, look here, Di ! (*moving over to her at* c.) —for goodness' sake, come off your high horse for a second and be reasonable ! You've told me what you think of me in half a dozen languages, and I've agreed with every word you've said. I'll do anything you ask within reason. But—dash it !—to demand that I shall walk through the lounge of the hotel, unshaven, in evening dress at this hour in the morning, *isn't* within reason. The place'll be full of people. They'll jump to conclusions—very indelicate conclusions. And appearances are against me—you must admit that !—shockingly against me.

(*He extends his left arm in a gesture of protest.* Diana *makes haste to slip the sleeve of his coat over it.*)

Diana. They always were!

(*She gets him into his coat, the top button of which* Ridgewell *fastens into a lower button-hole.*)

Ridgewell. All right. You needn't rub it in. I know you didn't get me off the bargain-counter.

(Diana *bangs his silk hat on to his head, causing him to wince.*)

But I ask you to consider—what would be my position if one of my subalterns were to see me?—if I were to run into a brother officer? . . . My reputation would be gone for ever!

Diana. I thought that sort of thing *made* men's reputations.

Ridgewell. Oh! I say!

Diana. And, in any case, it's not your reputation I'm asking you to think about. It's mine. (*Sitting on the divan.*)

Ridgewell (*coming* c.). Quite, old woman, quite. I appreciate that. But—having regard to the secretary-bird and all the rest of it—the point is will it bear thinking about?

Diana (*outraged*). O-oh!

Ridgewell. Now—look here, Di!—let's get down to bed rock. You're fed up with me about last night—and I don't blame you. But you're not as fed up as you're trying to make out.

(Diana's *exclamation of derision gives place to a smothered laugh as she sees how he has buttoned his coat. She draws his attention to it. He repairs the error.*)

You're not! . . . In the first place—if you had been—hot irons wouldn't have induced you to—to—well, to share a stable with me; and, in the second place—even if they had done—you'd have sat up shoving pins into yourself all night rather than go to sleep and let Heatley be up and doing before you'd given me the push.

Diana. I was utterly exhausted. There's a limit to what human nature can endure.

Ridgewell (*removing his hat and brushing it on his sleeve*). Precisely, old girl, precisely!—and what I'm trying to get at is that I don't seem to *be* that limit. (*Looking out at the audience, and speaking with sincerity and pathos.*) If I were quite sure that I were——

Diana. You won't take my word for it?

Ridgewell. No! No! That isn't the way of an eagle—even when he's moulting. (*Moving a little* r.)

Diana (*exclaiming in desperation*). O-oh! (*Rising and going over to the fireplace.*)

Ridgewell. But I'll tell you what I *will* do (*coming to the head of the divan*); I'll let you hide me somewhere about the place until it's dark, and, if you're of the same mind then that you are

now, I'll creep out without anybody being a penn'orth the wiser—and (*with a slight catch in his voice*) I'll never trouble you again.

Diana. Oh! Don't be so absurd! How can I possibly hide you in a tiny flat like this?

Ridgewell. What's the matter with the guest-room?

Diana. Heatley will want to go in to dust and open the windows.

Ridgewell. She can't if the key's missing. It was missing last night, and you couldn't. (*Moving away to* c.)

Diana. O-oh!

(*A pause.*)

Ridgewell. Well?

Diana (*joining him* c.). I can't put you out by force.

Ridgewell. Then you agree?

Diana. Under compulsion.

Ridgewell. The first time in our married life, my dear.

Diana (*scornfully, turning her back upon him*). The way of an eagle!

Ridgewell (*appealingly*). Doves aren't the only fowls that can carry olive-branches in their beaks, Di.

(Diana *keeping her back turned rigidly upon him.*)

(*After a brief pause he continues, with a nervous laugh.*) By the way, whilst we're on the subject of birds and peckish things like that, what about breakfast? You haven't had any—have you?

Diana (*on the verge of hysteria*). Breakfast! *Do* you imagine that I feel like breakfast?

Ridgewell (*sadly*). It's no good asking me. *I* can't imagine *anybody* feeling like breakfast—by which same token, what about a "hair of the dog," old girl?

Diana. All that you left is on the table there. (*Indicating the supper-table of the previous night.*)

Ridgewell (*in glad anticipation*). Ah! (*Moving across to the side-table, and holding up the decanter. His face falls. He regards his own achievement with astonishment.*) Lord! Did *I*——? . . . Oh!—the ways of these eagles! (*He empties the contents of the decanter into a tumbler, and drinks them "neat."*)

Diana (*going up to the front door. Impatiently*). How much longer are you going to keep me on the rack? Heatley must be back in a minute!

Ridgewell. Right-o, old thing—just going. (*Fishing the key of the guest-room from his waistcoat pocket, and unlocking and opening the door.*) Shall I lock the door on the other side, or——?

Diana (*crossing to him*). I'd rather lock it on this.

Ridgewell. Just as you like. (*Giving her the key.*) Well, cheeri-o!

(*He goes out.* Diana *locks the door upon him, then makes haste to*

the writing-table, snatches up her vanity-bag, and slips the key into it. Heatley's *key rattles in the lock of the front door.* Diana *hurries to the divan and casts herself upon it. Her head falls back upon the cushions, her eyes close, her brow contracts in an expression of pain, and every now and again a groan—artistically subdued—appears to be forced from her. She is careful not to open her eyes until* Heatley *is standing over her (at the head of the divan) and has called attention to her presence by a discreet cough. Then she looks up at her with a wan smile and inquires in a feeble voice :)*

Diana. Well, Heatley ?—managed to get the powders ?

Heatley. Yes, madam. There are six grains to a packet.

Diana. Then I'll take one.

(Heatley *places the papers containing the powders on the small table behind* Diana.)

Thank you. . . . Get me a glass of water from my bedroom, will you ?

Heatley. Yes, madam.

(*Goes out up the stairs to bedroom.*)

(*To* Diana's *horror,* Ridgewell *in the guest-room, sneezes loudly.*)

(Heatley *returns with a glass of water and an expression curiously grim.*)

I see you've had an accident, madam.

Diana. An accident ?

Heatley. One of your tooth-glasses is broken.

Diana. Oh, yes. . . . Yes. . . . I caught it with my sleeve. (*Taking the glass of water into her hand.*) Thank you. (*Swallowing the powder and taking two or three sips of water.*)

Heatley. You'll excuse me, madam—but are you wearing two nightdresses now ?

Diana (*choking as she drinks*). Eh ?

Heatley. There are two nightdresses—and a vest upon your bed, madam.

Diana (*with an uncomfortable laugh*). Oh !—yes, yes. I felt rather cold last night, so—er . . . (*Returning the glass to* Heatley.)

Heatley (*having allowed time for further explanation*). I see, madam. (*Depositing the glass on the table at the back of the divan.*) Will you be wearing them both to-night ?

Diana (*laughing as before*). I really can't say, Heatley. I—I don't expect so. It's turned distinctly warmer. Anyhow, you can send the—the pink one to the wash.

Heatley. Yes, madam. . . . Will you have breakfast now ?

Diana (*as though appalled by the mere thought of food*). No ! No ! I couldn't touch anything to eat. I'll wait until lunch-time.

Heatley. Very good, madam. (*Turning away as though to go,*

then stops, and comes back to Diana.) Is there anything else that I can get you before I go and take my hat and coat off?

Diana. Yes—soak this handkerchief in eau-de-Cologne. (*She indicates a large wicker-covered bottle that stands upon her writing-table.*)

(Heatley *obeys her behest.*)

Heatley (*returning and handing it to* Diana). Your handkerchief, madam.

Diana (*unconscious of impending trouble*). Thank you. (*She holds the handkerchief to her nostrils and inhales the perfume gratefully. Then she lies back upon the cushions and spreads it upon her brow.*)

(Heatley *watches the performance with sardonic amusement.*)

Heatley. And—er—I should wish to give notice, madam.

(*The announcement shocks* Diana *into forgetfulness of her pose. She sits bolt upright, and exclaims incredulously:*)

Diana. Heatley!

Heatley. I'm sure I'm very sorry, madam, but——

Diana. But why?—why on earth should you suddenly want to give me notice?

Heatley. I'd rather not say, madam.

Diana. But you *must* say! I insist! I've a right to know.

(*A brief pause before, with every appearance of reluctance,* Heatley *produces from the pocket of her coat a man's gold wrist-watch.*)

Heatley. I found this on your dressing-table, madam.

(Diana *gasps, but manages to make it appear that her gasp is one solely of indignation by demanding in a tone of haughty challenge:*)

Diana. Well?

Heatley. That's all, madam.

Diana (*working herself up*). But it isn't all! What do you mean, Heatley? What are you insinuating?

Heatley (*placing the watch by* Diana's *side*). I'd rather you didn't press the question, madam.

Diana. O-oh! How dare you, Heatley? That watch belongs to Mr. Ffolliott. I found it on the floor after he'd gone last night. It must have slipped from his wrist.

Heatley. Quite so, madam.

Diana. Do you mean to say you don't believe me?

(*The trill of an electric bell affords excuse to* Heatley *for evading reply. She responds with admirable dignity.*)

Heatley. I think I heard the bell, madam. (*Moving up towards the front door.*) Would you wish me to answer it?

Diana (*violently*). No! . . . I mean yes!—yes. We'll talk about this later.

(*Leaving* Diana *in a condition of high nervous tension,* Heatley *proceeds to the front door and opens it.*)

(Ffolliott's *voice is heard to inquire:*)

Ffolliott. Good morning, Heatley. Mrs. Ridgewell up?
Heatley. Yes, sir. . . . Will you come in?
Ffolliott. Thanks.

(*He enters, and pauses in the lobby to hang up his hat and to leave his cane in the umbrella-stand.* Heatley *comes down* r. *of the archway and announces:*)

Heatley. Mr. Ffolliott.

(Ffolliott *comes into the room down* c., *and* Diana *greets him excitedly:*)

Diana (*rising*). Owen! Will you please tell Heatley that this is your watch?
Ffolliott (*taken unawares*). Eh? . . . But—— (*Instinctively he glances at his wrist, and it is only by dint of* Diana's *grimace that he is restrained from announcing that his watch is in its accustomed place. He looks at her agape.*)
Heatley (*coming down* c. *a little*). I didn't dispute it, madam.
Diana. Kindly refrain from comment, Heatley.
Ffolliott. Here, I say! What's the matter?
Diana. You left it here last night. I put it on my dressing-table. Heatley found it, and has given me notice.
Ffolliott (*staggered*). What? (*He takes the watch from* Diana *and slips it into his pocket.*)
Diana. The inference that she draws is obvious. I can't possibly ignore it. I must accept her notice.
Heatley. Thank you, madam.

(*She turns to go.* Ffolliott *stops her.*)

Ffolliott. But I say, Di!—half a minute! I'm sure when Heatley realizes what an absurd mistake she's made, she——
Heatley. I'd rather leave things as they are, sir. (*Moving up towards door* l.)
Diana. You see! . . . O-oh! It's *too* outrageous! (*Flouncing over to her writing-table, and proceeding to make out a cheque.*) I'll give you a cheque for a month's wages, Heatley, and you can leave at once.

(Ffolliott *drops a little down* l., *takes a cigarette from his case, and lights it.*)

Heatley (*coming down* L. *of* Diana). Yes, madam. . . . Will it be quite convenient if I go out now and return for my things later ?

Diana (*filling in the amount of the cheque*). It's a matter of complete indifference to me what you do.

Heatley. Thank you, madam.

Ffolliott (*with a movement towards* Heatley). But, I say ! Come ! Come ! Don't let's do things in a hurry ! Can't we—— ?

Diana (*emphatically*). No, we can't, Owen ! (*Signing and blotting the cheque savagely.*)

Heatley. I quite agree with madam, sir.

Ffolliott. But it's too ridiculous ! Surely—— ?

Diana (*with an angry look at* Owen). The matter's settled, Owen. Don't let's say any more about it. (*Handing the cheque to her maid.*) There you are, Heatley.

Heatley. Thank you, madam. (*Having assured herself that it is made out correctly, she folds it in four.*) Good morning, madam. (*Turning to go, then checks, and addresses herself to* Ffolliott.) I wonder, sir, if you could oblige me with the address of the King's Proctor ?

(Diana *looks at* Ffolliott *in dismay.*)

Ffolliott (*aghast*). What ? ! . . . Heatley !

Heatley. Oh, it really doesn't matter, sir. I've no doubt the policeman at the corner will be able to tell me.

Ffolliott. But—— ! But—— !

(Heatley *continues on her way to the front door.*)

I say, Heatley ! Don't go yet ! I——

(*The banging of the front door, consequent on* Heatley's *departure, puts a full stop to his appeal. He turns a blank face to* Diana.)

Well ! *Now* we're in for it !

Diana (*assuming a confidence she is far from feeling*). Nonsense ! She was only trying to frighten us.

Ffolliott (*up* R.C. *on the* L. *of the archway*). Trying ! She's put the wind up me all right ! . . . Supposing she goes to the King's Proctor ? (*Coming down* C.)

Diana. Well, supposing she does ? All that she can tell him is that she found your watch in my bedroom. I don't see how that can hurt us. You don't wear your watch next to your skin.

Ffolliott (*in scandalized protest*). My dear Di !—really—— !

Diana. That's all that the King's Proctor is concerned with, isn't it ?

Ffolliott. But it *isn't* my watch ! (*Taking the watch from his pocket.*) I suppose it belongs to your confounded husband. (*Moving to the left end of the writing-table and placing the watch upon it.*)

Diana. It does, but she doesn't know that. (*Putting the watch into the drawer of the writing-table.*)

Ffolliott. You're quite sure ?—quite certain that she has no suspicion—— ?

Diana. Quite. (*Rising and taking the tea-tray to the side-table, and returning to her former position at writing-table.*)

Ffolliott. Then all the more reason why you should have avoided quarrelling with her. (*Crossing away down* L.)

Diana. My dear Owen ! I don't quarrel with my servants. Heatley gave me notice.

Ffolliott. Yes, yes, I know. But surely it only required a little tact to——

Diana. To make quite sure that her abominable suspicions were deserved—that I'm an abandoned woman and that you're to blame for it !

Ffolliott (*crossing behind* Diana *to above the writing-table* R.). Well, well, it's no good arguing about it now, but I do feel that in the circumstances——

Diana. And I feel that, in the circumstances, you might be a little more sympathetic. I've had the most ghastly time.

Ffolliott (*dropping down* R.). Yes, yes, old girl. I'm sure you have. The only thing is——

Diana (*rising hysterically and crossing to the fireplace*). Oh ! Don't keep on harping on it, Owen ! I know ! I know ! I know !

Ffolliott. Well, I don't know what Archer'll have to say about it. He was quite chirpy when I rang him up just now—seemed to think we could get over last night's affair without much trouble. But *this*—— !

Diana. I'll go and see him.

Ffolliott. He's coming to see you.

(*The trill of the electric front-door bell is heard.*)

I expect that'll be him.

Diana. Good gracious !—(*moving up* C.) I can't possibly receive him like this. (*Indicating her deshabille.*)

Ffolliott (*joining* Diana *up* C.). What ?—old Archer ?—after twenty-five years' practice in the divorce court ? My dear girl, he wouldn't turn a hair if you received him in your bath !

Diana. Even so, I should want to powder my nose before you let him in.

(*Crossing in front of* Ffolliott *to above the table, picks up her vanity-bag, and with the aid of powder-puff and lip-stick makes a hasty toilet.* Ffolliott *watching her from the foot of the stairs.*)

Now then !

(Ffolliott *proceeds to the front door and opens it.*)

Archer (*on the threshold*). Ah ! So you've got here before me, Mr. Ffolliott. . . . Mrs. Ridgewell—er—— ?

(DIANA *moves to* C., *facing the front door.*)

FFOLLIOTT. Waiting for you. . . . Come in, Archer. . . . Hang your hat up there.

ARCHER. Thank you. Thank you. (FFOLLIOTT *motions him to precede him. He demurs.*) No! No!—after you. (*Following* FFOLLIOTT *into the room.* DIANA *coming forward to greet him, and shaking hands.*)

(FFOLLIOTT *drops down stage* R. *of the table.*)

DIANA. Good morning, Mr. Archer. I must apologize for appearing like this, but——

ARCHER. My dear lady, pray don't apologize. I assure you you look charming—charming.

DIANA. Thank you. . . . Won't you sit down?

ARCHER. Thank you. (*Taking his place at the head of the writing-table and motioning to* DIANA *and to* FFOLLIOTT *to seat themselves on his left and right respectively.*) Well, well, from what Mr. Ffolliott has told me, I fear you've had a very unpleasant experience, Mrs. Ridgewell.

DIANA. A dreadful experience.

ARCHER. I can appreciate that. But you mustn't let it disturb you unduly. From what I have gathered from Mr. Ffolliott of the circumstances, I have hopes that we shall be able to—er—well, to avoid any unpleasant consequences.

DIANA. It's a great relief to hear you say that.

ARCHER. I can appreciate that, also. . . . Now I think I'm in full possession of the facts, so we need do no more than run over the main points briefly. . . . Upon your return from a dance, with Mr. Ffolliott, in the early hours of this morning—by the way, a little indiscreet that, dear lady, a *little* indiscreet—you found that your husband had taken possession of your flat, of—er—certain of your garments and of your bed.

DIANA. That's right.

ARCHER. Upon being roused, he appeared in an intoxicated condition, and employed language that was not only unbecoming but—er—distinctly opprobious.

(*The word is new to* FFOLLIOTT. *He looks mystified.*)

DIANA (*with a nervous glance over her shoulder in the direction of the guest-room door*). Well—er—he certainly wasn't very polite to Mr. Ffolliott.

FFOLLIOTT. He was damned insulting!

ARCHER. Quite; quite. . . . The point I am endeavouring to arrive at is that his condition was such as to render it unthinkable for Mrs. Ridgewell to—er—well, to resume relations with him.

FFOLLIOTT (*with emphasis*). Absolutely!

ARCHER. You agree, Mrs. Ridgewell?

DIANA (*struggling to conceal her nervousness*). Yes—yes—quite.

Archer. Now then!—your husband having retired to bed again, Mr. Ffolliott left, and you took refuge in the guest-room, in which you passed the night.

Diana (*falteringly*). N-no.

Ffolliott (*metaphorically jumping out of his seat*). *No?!*

Diana. That's what I'd meant to do, but, when I tried the door, I found that my husband had locked it and removed the key.

Ffolliott. Good God!

Archer (*rubbing his hands together in token of satisfaction*). Capital! Capital!

Ffolliott (*indignantly explosive*). What?!

Archer. So much the better for our case, my dear sir!—so much the better for our case! . . . But to proceed, Mrs. Ridgewell—finding the door of the guest-room locked against you, you—er——

Diana. I laid down upon that couch. (*She indicates it.*)

Archer. In a thin evening gown?

Diana. Yes.

Ffolliott. G'rr! What a scandalous affair!

Archer (*semi-questioning*). Compelled, by your husband's act, to spend the night there without covering.

Diana. I had my cloak and a few cushions.

Archer. But nothing more substantial?

Diana. Er—the hearthrug. (*She indicates the tiger-skin rug.*)

Archer. In the eyes of the law no covering at all. . . . It is agreed, Mrs. Ridgewell, that your husband returned to you in a condition that rendered unthinkable any—er—any resumption of relations with him, and the fact that he took elaborate precautions to starve you into submission must, I think, be held to constitute deliberate cruelty on his part.

Ffolliott. I should think it must! It was absolutely freezing! It's a marvel to me, Di, that you're not down with pneumonia. . . . G'rr! What a brute!

Archer. Mrs. Ridgewell, I don't want to inquire too closely into the circumstances that led to your husband's departure in the early hours of this morning, but I take it that he conveyed to you his intention of never returning.

Diana. Ye-yes—oh, yes!

Archer. Can you call a witness to confirm that?

Diana. No. Besides us, there was nobody in the flat, except my maid, and she knows nothing at all about it.

Archer. She is in total ignorance of his having been here?

Diana. Yes.

Archer. Hum. In a way that's rather a pity—rather a pity. Still, the facts of the case are such that I don't think we need have any hesitation in appealing to the Court to exercise its discretion in your favour.

Diana (*dismayed*). What? Go to the Court again?

Archer. That is what I should advise, dear lady. Indeed, it is the only course to pursue. (*Portentously he addresses himself to* Ffolliott, *who turns from him in impatient boredom.*) This is one of those rare occasions upon which one has nothing to gain by concealment of the facts—(*turning his attention to* Diana, *who repeats* Ffolliott's *action*) one of those rare occasions upon which I can conscientiously recommend a client to depend for justice upon the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Diana (*swinging about again*). But we shall all look so foolish! I thought that so long as nobody *knew* that Bill had been back——

Ffolliott. Half a minute, Di! You're forgetting about Heatley.

Archer. Heatley?

Ffolliott. Mrs. Ridgewell's maid.

Archer. But—er——

Ffolliott. There's been a bit of a complication, Archer. Ridgewell left his watch behind—in the bedroom unfortunately. Heatley found it there, gave Mrs. Ridgewell notice, and talked about going to the King's Proctor.

Archer. Going to the——?! (*Shows his concern by clicking his tongue against his teeth.*) Tut-tut-tut-tut-ter! . . . This puts a new complexion on the matter altogether!

Diana. It's *too* ridiculous!

Archer. But I understood you to say, Mrs. Ridgewell, that your maid is in complete ignorance of your husband having been here.

Diana. So she is.

Archer. Then—er——?!

Diana. *She* thinks the watch belongs to Mr. Ffolliott. I told her that I found it after he'd gone last night, and put it on the dressing-table for safety.

Archer. And she refused to give credence to that statement?

Ffolliott. Wouldn't listen to it.

Archer. But, Mrs. Ridgewell, on the last occasion on which we spoke of your maid I gathered that she was devoted to you.

Diana. So I always thought until this morning.

Archer. But come, come, dear lady! Surely there must be something behind all this?—something more than the mere discovery of a watch upon your dressing-table.

Diana (*uneasily*). There isn't—really. It's just, I think, that she got out of bed the wrong side. She started to be tiresome right away. (*Turning to* Ffolliott.) What set her off was finding your photographs in the waste-paper basket.

Ffolliott (*in shocked surprise*). Eh?

Diana (*unable to resist a gurgle of amusement*). Bill must have put them there.

(Ffolliott *gives incoherent expression to his sense of outrage.*)

Archer. And how did you account for their presence in so—er—inappropriate a quarter?

Diana. I didn't attempt to.

Archer. Hum.

Diana. Next it was the supper things.

Archer. The—supper things?

Diana. They weren't there one minute and they were the next!

Ffolliott. What on earth do you mean, Di?

Diana. Oh!—it doesn't matter! It was the nightdresses that *really* did it.

Ffolliott (*disturbed*). The nightdresses?!

Diana (*realizing that she has betrayed herself*). Er—er—yes.

(*Ensues a pause during which* Archer *and* Ffolliott *exchange significant glances.*)

Archer. And what, precisely, do the nightdresses signify, Mrs. Ridgewell?

Diana. They don't signify anything. But there were two of them, you see—and Heatley saw them.

Archer. Where did she see them?

Diana (*hesitantly*). On my bed.

Ffolliott. Two?!

Diana. Ye-yes—two.

Archer. The explanation being that—er——?

Diana. That Bill had worn them. He must have done.

Ffolliott. I'll swear that he'd only one on when *I* went into the room!

Diana. Well, perhaps he felt cold and got another afterwards.

(*Again a significant and awkward pause.*)

(Diana *wilts under* Archer's *cold and incredulous regard.*)

Archer (*gravely*). Mrs. Ridgewell, if we are to appeal to the clemency of the Court it is essential that we place before it the whole facts of the case—concealing nothing. . . . Now is there anything that you have refrained from telling us? (*He observes her closely.*)

Diana. N-no. . . . Why should there be?

Ffolliott (*half in appeal, half in command*). Di!

Diana. Well, perhaps there is just one little thing.

Archer. Ah!

Diana. I suppose it was very silly of me, but you said yourself, Owen, that you wonder that I haven't got pneumonia.

Ffolliott. Well?

Diana. Well, you didn't *want* me to get pneumonia, did you?

Ffolliott (*impatiently*). My dear girl——!

Diana. And I certainly should have got it if I'd stayed on that couch much longer.

Archer (*betokening his discomfort by clearing his throat*). Ahem!

FFOLLIOTT (*bewildered*). What d'you mean, Di? . . . You didn't——?! (*He waves a hand in the direction of the bedroom.*)

DIANA (*desperately*). Well, after all, he is my husband; and I thought that so long as I could get him away without anybody knowing that he'd been here——

FFOLLIOTT. Good God!

(*A pause.* ARCHER *averts his face.* FFOLLIOTT *addresses him harshly:*)

That just about settles it, doesn't it?

ARCHER (*rising*). It disposes of our entire case.

DIANA (*also rising*). Oh! Don't say that!

ARCHER. My dear lady, there is nothing else I can say.

(FFOLLIOTT *rises.*)

DIANA. O-oh! . . . Owen! You're not angry with me, are you?

FFOLLIOTT (*bitterly*). Angry!

DIANA. I was perished!—absolutely perished! I——

FFOLLIOTT (*brutally*). Oh! Don't go on talking about it! . . . What's the position now, Archer? (*He motions him to resume his seat.*)

ARCHER. We have returned to the *status ante quo.*

(*He and* FFOLLIOTT *sit down.*)

DIANA. What d'you mean by that? (*She sits.*)

ARCHER. That either we must wait until your husband may be considered to have deserted you for a second time, or—er——

DIANA (*impatiently*). Or?—what's the or?

ARCHER. Place it in his power to divorce you.

FFOLLIOTT (*decisively*). Out of the question!

DIANA. I think you might have waited for me to say that.

FFOLLIOTT. By the terms of my grandfather's will I become a pauper if I appear in a divorce case or marry an actress.

DIANA. But he married an actress himself!

FFOLLIOTT. That's why. She divorced him, and he lost his job as an Ecclesiastical Commissioner.

DIANA. Then what's to be done? Do you mean to say that we've got to go through all this business of suing for—for— Oh! I can only remember what George Robey calls it!—again?

FFOLLIOTT. That isn't what I should suggest.

DIANA. Well, what *do* you suggest?

FFOLLIOTT (*slowly*). That we accept the position as it stands.

DIANA (*springing to her feet*). Owen!

ARCHER (*uncomfortably*). Perhaps it would be more convenient if I were to—er—to retire. (*Rising.*)

FFOLLIOTT (*rising also*). No, no, Archer. You are acting in both our interests.

Diana. Please stay, Mr. Archer.

Archer. The position is extremely awkward, I—er——

Ffolliott (*cutting him short*). Sit down, Archer!

(Archer *resumes his seat plainly under protest.*)

Diana. Now, please let's understand one another, Owen! Do you mean to say that—after all I've been through—you intend to leave me in the lurch?

Ffolliott. I mean to say— . . . Oh, well, if you can't *see* what I mean——!

Diana (*furiously*). Oh!

Archer (*rising and placing a hand upon* Diana's *shoulder and persuading her to sit down. Urbanely*). May I be permitted to intervene? . . . Speaking now solely as *your* adviser, Mrs. Ridgewell, whilst we *must* recognize that the—er—the circumstances of which Mr. Ffolliott—er—complains *do* lay themselves open to a certain measure of misconception——

Ffolliott. Oh! What's the good of beating about the bush? (*Motioning to* Archer *to be seated, and, at the same time, seating himself.*) You've made a bloomer, Di, and so have I—far better recognize it before it's too late.

Diana. O-oh!

Archer (*hastily*). Well, well, may I suggest, Mr. Ffolliott, that we postpone decision? It only requires a little reflection, I am sure, to convince you that Mrs. Ridgewell's act was inspired solely by motives of self-protection—solely!

Ffolliott. I'm afraid I can't agree.

Diana (*again springing to her feet*). O-oh!—you——!

Archer. In that case, Mrs. Ridgewell, I'm afraid there is nothing further to be said.

(Ridgewell's *voice rings out, indignant and threatening from behind the guest-room door.*)

Ridgewell. Oh, isn't there?! . . . Believe me, there's a lot more to be said!—a lot more! (*He rattles the handle of the door impatiently.*)

(*The eyes of* Archer *and of* Ffolliott, *that at the first sound of* Ridgewell's *voice have turned in shocked surprise in the direction of the guest-room, are focused now accusingly upon* Diana.)

Ffolliott (*rising*). Good God!

(Archer, *who has risen to his feet, crosses behind* Diana *to her* L., *and, facing the guest-room door, demands of her dramatically:*)

Archer. Mrs. Ridgewell! *Who* is behind that door?

(*A strange look comes upon* Diana's *face. She answers not a word,*

but darts to the door of the guest-room, unlocks, and throws it open; then backs to the C. *of the stage.*)

(Ridgewell *comes out. He bows ironically to* Ffolliott *and to* Archer.)

Ridgewell. Good morning—er—gentlemen. (*Coming* R.C.)

Ffolliott (*to* Archer). Ha! Now you see the sort of people that we've got to deal with!

Archer. Mrs. Ridgewell! This is monstrous!—absolutely monstrous.

(Diana *shrinks, and crossing behind the divan, sits down.*)

Ridgewell (*smoothly*). If you have any further observations of that sort to make, Mr. Archer, I shall be obliged if you will address them to me and not to my wife. (*Advancing to the writing-table, and placing his hat upon it.*) You may say what you like of my conduct, but she has done nothing whatsoever to deserve your condemnation, or—(*pausing, and looking contemptuously at* Ffolliott) or that of your distinguished client there.

Archer. That, sir, must remain a matter of opinion.

Ridgewell (*with underlying menace*). That, sir, is just what it must not.

(*A pause.* Archer *glares at* Ridgewell, *who returns him look for look.*)

Archer (*turning at length to* Diana). Mrs. Ridgewell, you will, I am sure, appreciate my position when I beg to be relieved of any further responsibility in the conduct of your affairs and to wish you good morning.

Ffolliott. Same here!

(*They make for the front door.*)

Ridgewell (*intercepting them*). And I am sure, gentlemen, that you will appreciate *my* position when I assure you that any attempt to leave here until we are of the same mind will result in—er—somebody being hurt.

Archer (*apoplectically*). Commander Ridgewell! You can hardly wish Mr. Ffolliott and myself to understand that you would forcibly obstruct our departure.

Ridgewell. How beautifully you put it.

Ffolliott. T'sch! (*Dropping down* R. *below the writing-table.*)

Ridgewell. Bless you!

(Ffolliott *glares at him.*)

Archer. This is an outrage, sir!

Ffolliott (*savagely—coming below the table to* R.C.). Look here, Ridgewell——!

Archer (*dropping down stage a little, and holding up a restraining hand*). Commander Ridgewell!

Ridgewell. Yours to command, sir. (*Coming down to the* c. *of the stage.*)

Archer. If you have anything to say that is—er—germane to the issue, will you please say it?—and so put an end to an intolerable situation.

Ridgewell. With pleasure! . . . You said just now, Mr. Archer, that my wife's conduct has been open to misconception—but where? She is not to blame for my presence here either last night or now. For the first offence you must hold the old brandy at my club responsible, and for the second a certain instinctive reluctance upon my part to be seen parading Piccadilly in dress clothes at midday.

Archer (*shortly*). That is not the point, sir. (*Moving up to the foot of the staircase.*)

Ridgewell (*mildly*). Then what is?

Diana. Bill! Need you go on?

Ridgewell. Yes, yes, my dear. I want to get at it. . . . What *is* the point, Mr. Ffolliott?

Ffolliott. Do you wish me to dot all the i's and cross the t's?

Ridgewell. I don't know about crossing the t's, but (*grimly*) you can leave it to me to do any dotting of the eyes that may be necessary.

Ffolliott. As I have already explained to Mrs. Ridgewell, it is palpable that she has underestimated the strength of her affection for you.

Ridgewell. I wish it were palpable to me.

Diana (*in distress*). Bill!—please!

Ridgewell (*with a glance in her direction*). Unfortunately she has spared no pains to convince me of the contrary. I *am* convinced! That's good enough for you!—(*he thrusts his face combatively into* Ffolliott's) isn't it?

Ffolliott (*carelessly*). You have spoken.

Ridgewell. And I'm going on speaking! . . . It was you who declared that if Diana had stayed on that couch all night she'd have caught pneumonia.

Ffolliott. Was it?

Ridgewell (*violently*). Wasn't it?

Ffolliott. Your ear was at the keyhole.

Ridgewell. Answer me—damn you!

Archer (*coming forward a step*). Commander Ridgewell! I protest.

Ridgewell (*turning to him furiously*). Shut up!—er—I beg your pardon, sir—please be silent. . . . (*Turning to* Ffolliott.) Well?

Ffolliott. I see no objection to admitting that I said something of the sort.

Ridgewell. Would you have wished the woman you love to catch pneumonia?

Archer. Commander Ridgewell, that is a leading question.

Ridgewell (*turning to* Archer). Leading straight to the point! (*Turning again to* Ffolliott—*savagely.*) Would you?

Ffolliott (*airily*). And if I say no?

Ridgewell (*with a wave of his hand towards* Diana). Then you admit that my wife did the only thing possible in the circumstances—and you will accept my assurance that her conduct has been above reproach.

Ffolliott (*going up to him*). I'm damned if I'll accept anything of the sort!

Ridgewell (*tensely*). Take that back, Ffolliott!

Diana (*rising*). Bill! Bill! Have you no mercy?

Ridgewell. On whom? (*Turning to her.*)

Diana. On me!

Ridgewell. It's you I'm thinking of all the time.

Diana. Then, if that's true, stop all this argument and let them go. . . . Mr. Ffolliott has said that he doesn't want anything more to do with me. Isn't that sufficient?

Ridgewell. Mr. Ffolliott has been talking round his hat. He's going to tell you so—to ask you to forgive him.

Diana. I don't want him to tell me so. I don't want anything more to do with him.

Ridgewell (*his voice tense—his gaze riveted upon her*). Is that a true bill?

(Diana *avoids meeting his eye. She urges* Archer *and* Ffolliott *faintly.*)

Diana. Please go!

Ffolliott (*in insolent protest, and with a step towards them*). My *dear* Mrs. Ridgewell——!

Ridgewell (*turning upon him savagely*). Get out!

(Ffolliott *opens his mouth to make reply, and then thinks better of it. He looks insolently from* Ridgewell *to* Diana, *and, sneering, takes his departure.*)

(*Reaction overtakes* Ridgewell. *He drops into the chair on the* L. *of the writing-table, and gives himself up to unhappy thought. The voice of* Archer, *whose presence he has quite forgotten, rouses him from his reverie.*)

Archer. Commander Ridgewell! (*He comes down to* Ridgewell's L.)

Ridgewell (*starting*). M'm? (*He turns and regards* Archer *with a whimsical smile.*) Oh! Now I'm for it, I suppose. . . . Am I to hold out my hand or to bend down?

Archer (*the muscles of his mouth relaxing*). Hold out your hand!

Ridgewell (*obediently—in the manner of a small child*). Yes, teacher.

Archer. Commander Ridgewell, whilst your conduct has been quite indefensible——

Ridgewell (*in grave agreement*). Quite.

Archer (*taking his hand and shaking it warmly*). I congratulate Mrs. Ridgewell.

(Ridgewell *is non-plussed. He does not know how to answer.*)

Good morning.

(*He moves towards the door. At the prospect of being left alone with his wife all* Ridgewell's *native nervousness returns to him. He makes haste after* Archer.)

Ridgewell. But here——!—I say!—Archer——!

Archer. No, no! Please don't trouble to come to the door. I'll let myself out. (*He bows to* Diana, *who stands with her back turned to him.*) Good morning, Mrs. Ridgewell.

Diana (*low-voiced*). Good-bye, Mr. Archer, and—thank you. (*She seats herself upon the couch, and gazes into the fireplace.*)

(Archer *advances to the front door.*)

Ridgewell (*his apprehension increasing with every moment, endeavours to detain him*). Yes, but——!

(Archer *goes out. The door slams.* Diana *rises, still gazing into the fireplace.*)

(Ridgewell *stands looking after him, nervously fingering his chin.*) Hum!

(*A considerable pause.*)

Diana. Bill!

Ridgewell. Yes. (*Coming down* R. *of the divan.*)

Diana. I wish you'd learnt the way of an eagle years ago.

Ridgewell. Oh? . . . Why?

Diana. If you had, I should never have been Mrs. Dove. (*Sitting on the divan.*)

Ridgewell. Well, it's come to the same thing in the long run, hasn't it? You've got your cage all to yourself now. (*Moving up* R.C.)

Diana (*sadly*). That isn't what I meant. . . . What are you going to do, Bill?

Ridgewell (*makes sudden resolution. Turning and advancing to the divan*). Return to Mespot by the first boat—bag and baggage.

Diana. And what's to become of me?

Ridgewell (*seats himself beside her*). I said—and baggage.

(*There is a tender roughness both in his voice and in the grip which he takes upon her arms and pulls her about to face him.*)

Diana (*wonder and hope shine in her eyes. She exclaims incredulously*). Bill!

(*His arms enfold her, and half-laughing, half-crying, she yields herself to his embrace.*)

The Curtain *falls.*

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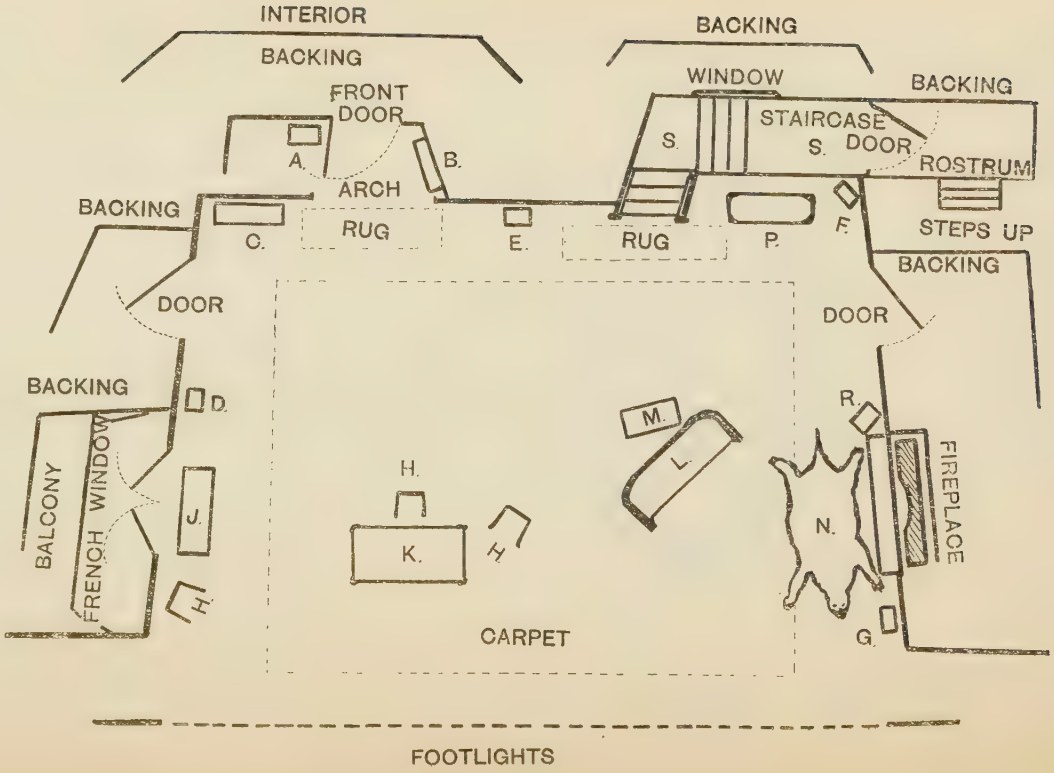
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K.
M.
L.
R.
N.
FIREPLACE
G.
CARPET
FOOTLIGHTS

FURNITURE AND PROPERTIES

ACT I

A. Small hall table. (*On same*)—telephone.
B. Hat-and-coat stand.
C. Specimen cabinet, containing china, etc.
D. Pedestal, with palm.
E. Pedestal, with jar of delphiniums.
F. Pedestal, with palm.
G. Pedestal, with jar of hydrangeas.
H. Small chair.
H. Small armchair.
H. Small chair with arms, behind desk.
J. Side table in front of window R. (*On same*)—bowl of flowers, pair of silver candlesticks, silver cigarette-box and matches.
K. Fairly large table, used as desk. (*On same*)—blotter, quill pens (red and black and white), paper, envelopes, etc., etc., 4 framed photos of FFOLLIOTT, small bowl of roses, tear-off calendar, box of cigarettes and match-stand.
L. Divan or settee.
M. Small table behind and above settee.
N. Large skin rug (tiger if possible).
P. Large pouffe up L.
R. Coal-box.
S. and S. Landings on staircase.
Oriental carpet and rugs.
Fender and fireirons (fire to light).
On Mantelpiece.—French clock, photo frames, silver vases with carnations.
Key in door up R. (practical lock).

OFF STAGE

Stage L.—Glass of drinking-water.
Mixed whisky and soda.
Two aspirins.
} All on silver salver.
Watch for FFOLLIOTT.
Electric bell.

ACT II

Small chair is placed left of archway.
All flowers are changed to suitable autumn ones.
On side-table is a siphon, whisky decanter, two glasses, on silver salver; silver dish of sandwiches and a silver cake dish.
The pouffe is in front of fire.

OFF STAGE

Stage R.—Motor horn.
Stage L.—Upstairs in bedroom, ladies' silken vest and nightdress.
Practical key in door stage R.
Watch for RIDGEWELL.

ACT III

Chair back in original position, also pouffe.

OFF STAGE

Stage L.—The sandwiches, siphon, etc.
Small tray with morning tea.
Glass crash.
Two paper packets of aspirin.
Powder and watch for HEATLEY.
Carpet sweeper and duster for HEATLEY.
Bell (electric).

LIGHTING PLOT

ACT I

Floats.—White and amber (FULL UP).
No. 1 *Batten.*—White and amber (FULL UP).
Amber spot fixed on No. 1 Batten focused on chair.
Fire out.
Light blue flood at windows R.
Hanging lamp with practical switch in archway.
Amber length outside front door (*this length is alive throughout*).
Amber and white length at R. of archway.
Amber and white length (practical switch) outside bedroom door.

ACT II

To Open.—Everything out except fire and the length already mentioned, and dark blue flood outside windows.
RIDGEWELL switches on hanging lamp.
At cue (RIDGEWELL).—Full up as in Act I, plus wall brackets and table lamp come up.
The amber spot is out and is not used in this Act.
RIDGEWELL switches off hanging lamp.
RIDGEWELL switches on and off length outside bedroom door.
RIDGEWELL squirts siphon on fire, which flickers, smokes, then goes out.
At cue (RIDGEWELL).—Stage black out.

(*Interval.*)

To Open.—Black out. Fire out.
FFOLLIOTT lights hanging lamp.
At cue (DIANA).—Full up as in previous scene, plus rose-pink flood from No. 1 Batten (focused on sofa) and small circuit. Rose pink in floats.
FFOLLIOTT puts out hanging lamp.
At cue (DIANA).—No. 1 Batten and floats and wall brackets out.
At cue (DIANA).—Reading-lamp, pink-float circuit and pink flood out (i.e. Stage black out). Red flood outside bedroom door.

ACT III

Full up as in Act I. Fire alight.

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